

THE UNDISCOVERED CHRIST

A Review of recent Developments in the Christian
Approach to the Hindu

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A Review of recent Developments
in the Christian Approach to the Hindu

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I

INTRODUCTION

The relationship of Christianity to other world religions is becoming an increasingly important subject for contemporary theology. In Britain, for example, the Church is being brought in a new way into day-to-day contact with members of other faiths. In India, from the first the Church has been set in a plural situation and has wrestled with this problem for more than a hundred years.

The Growth of a Sympathetic Approach

With a few exceptions, the predominant attitude of nineteenth century missionaries was one of stark hostility to Hinduism. An anonymous author in the *Biblical Repository* for 1860 wrote: 'The heathen are under condemnation, and to them a dark and hopeless one; they know of no escape . . . the wrath of God is abiding on them.'¹ By the end of the century, attitudes were changing. Converts like Goreh and Upādhyāya wrote with a real knowledge of their old faith. Some missionaries, like Slater and Farquhar, influenced by the theory of evolution, saw in Hinduism a stage in man's religious development. The scientific study of Eastern religions, of which Max Müller was a pioneer, suggested a more sympathetic attitude. At the same time theology was pervaded by a more liberal spirit. The change was such that the Report of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910 could say that the answers to a preliminary ques-

tionnaire by missionaries working in India all laid emphasis 'upon the necessity that the missionary to the Hindu should possess, and not merely assume, a sympathetic attitude towards India's most ancient religion'.²

This more sympathetic attitude gained ground in the period between the wars, both amongst missionaries like MacNicol and among Indian Christians like Appasamy, Chenchiah and Chakkrai. This development, however, was checked by the Tambaram Missionary Conference, which was deeply influenced by the Dutch missionary theologian Hendrik Kraemer.

Kraemer

Kraemer works with Barth's distinction of 'religion' and 'revelation' and argues that the biblical revelation is quite other than the thought of the world religions. He writes of his *Religion and the Christian Faith* that the 'object of this book has been to show that biblical thinking, the whole world of attitudes and decisions and modes of being implied in the biblical revelation, is a type wholly *sui generis*, distant from religious thinking in the usual understanding of the word and equally distant from philosophical thinking'.³ The Christian has to judge other religions in the light of the Gospel—indeed there can be no impartial standpoint. The primary task of the Church is 'the announcement of the Message of God which is not adaptable to any religion or philosophy'.⁴ God's revelation in Christ is something quite new; but the message needs to be presented 'in a persuasive and winning manner so as to evince the real Christian spirit of service to God and to man'.⁵ This was why he was anxious that Christians should really understand the thought-world of those to whom they preached.

Kraemer's attitude was coloured by his emphasis on the 'totalitarian' character of a religion. He regarded each religion as an all-inclusive unit characterised by a particular apprehension of the totality of existence. This implied an inter-relationship between the politico-social and spiritual dimensions of a religion. It also implied that each religious phenomenon is integrated organically into the structure of the religion concerned, and thus integrated it reflects the basic pattern which keeps that religion as an all-inclusive unit. A religion is a self-consistent whole, in which every aspect reflects the basic interpretation of reality which characterises it. Christianity too is an all-inclusive religious unit, kept together by a particular apprehension of the totality of existence, which Kraemer called *Biblical Realism*. The premises of biblical realism were quite other than the premises of the world religions. Hence the famous doctrine of 'discontinuity', which Kraemer expounded in his *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, the book on which centred the controversies of the Tambaran Conference. Although a full discussion of Tambaran is, as Hallencreutz says⁶, required, it is clear from the findings in *The Authority of Faith*⁷, that his influence was dominant.

After Tambaran

The effect of Tambaran on the Indian scene was to create a reaction to the liberalism of the inter-war period. Chenchiah or S. K. George or C. F. Andrews continued to advocate inter-religious fellowship, but theirs was a minority view. The emphasis of Dr. Marcus Ward's *Our Theological Task*, which represented a consensus position, was on the unchanging universal aspects of Christianity.

He distinguished between the unchangeable core—dogma—and the relative element—doctrine. Although Ward recognized the need to interpret ideas of universal import 'into terms and symbols comprehensible to each of the many varieties of contemporary human outlook'⁸, his stress was on the fundamental and unchangeable core of the Christian faith.

It was not until the nineteen fifties, in newly independent India, under the inspiration of Paul Devanandan, that the question of Christianity's relationship to Hinduism was taken up in a new way, which yet did not ignore the insights of Kraemer. In the last twenty years, the whole issue has been widely discussed and the 'theology of dialogue' has come to the fore. It is these developments which will be considered in this book.

II

PAUL DEVANANDAN

Paul David Devanandan was born in Madras in 1901. As a young man he came under the influence of the Christian nationalist leader K. T. Paul, who took him as his secretary on his visit to the United States in 1924-5. Devanandan stayed on to study in America for the next seven years. On returning to India, he became teacher of Philosophy and the History of Religions at the United Theological College, Bangalore, where he remained for seventeen years. After some work with the Y.M.C.A., he became, in 1956, the Director of the newly-formed Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (C.I.S.R.S.) at Bangalore. It was here, where he stayed until his death in 1962, that he exercised his widest influence. This was not only because of his own writings, but because he stimulated other Christians to give more serious attention to Hinduism and nation-building. Apart from his thesis, which was eventually published in 1950 as *The Concept of Māyā*, most of his writings were articles, pamphlets, papers or sermons. Some of these have been posthumously collected and published by C.I.S.R.S.

Although he became critical of Kraemer, Devanandan formulated his basic ideas when Kraemer's influence was at its height. M. M. Thomas says that it was Kraemer's *Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* which helped Devanandan to recover the core of the Christian Gospel. For his theological studies in America had left him with nothing but a philosophy of religion.¹

Devanandan himself in his assessment of Tambaram admitted his debt to Kraemer's contribution. This, he said, had restored the balance between the proclamation of 'what is given in God's revelation in Christ' and the sharing of religious experience. With this shift of emphasis from 'sharing' to 'proclaiming', the relation of Christians to those of other faiths had become secondary. Devanandan also appreciated the emphasis on the Church as an ecumenical and world-wide community, united in the task of spreading abroad 'the evangel'. His concern for the world-wide Church showed itself in the fact that at the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, he chose to make his major contribution to the discussion on *The Universal Church in God's Design*, although there was a section on the Church's witness. Even before the meeting at Willingen in 1952, however, Devanandan had begun to reconsider the question of missionary priorities. With reference to the on-going resurgence of ancient religions in Asia he raised anew the question of the Christian attitude to the non-Christian religions. D. T. Niles and others were also aware of the significance of these developments, and in 1955 the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council launched the study project on *The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men*. In the following year, Kraemer published his *Religion and the Christian Faith* in which, although he maintained his essential position, he put more emphasis on contact and communication and less on controversy. Very soon after the book appeared, Devanandan and M. M. Thomas initiated a series of seminars and study conferences to prepare the Asian contribution to the World Council of Churches and International Missionary Council project.

Summing up the first stage of the study, M. M. Thomas drew attention to two areas, where further thought was needed. In the first place Thomas pleaded for a continuous probing into man's religious consciousness and the structures or constitution of human nature which make both response to and rebellion against God possible—in brief, a study of 'common humanity'. Secondly, more thought was needed on the meaning of revelation so as to include not just the relation between man and God, but also 'the transformation of human nature and human relations'.³ 'It is proper', M. M. Thomas wrote, 'to include the new structures of Christian community as part of the deed of God in Christ'.⁴ It was to this area of study that Devanandan's theme of 'new creation' related.

New Creation

God's concern, as expressed in creation and His continuous creative activity and providence is, Devanandan claimed, for all men. God's purpose was temporarily checked by human sin, but it will be achieved through the new creation in Christ. For Devanandan believed that Christ inaugurated a 'new creation' with cosmic dimensions. God had acted in Christ to restore mankind and the discerning eye could detect signs of the new creation in contemporary history. 'In Jesus Christ', he told the Third General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi, 'peace is made between God and man, so that man is restored to his rightful place in God's creation as God's confidant and companion; peace is secured between man and his neighbour so that mankind, saved from self-destruction, discovers the secret fellowship in true community; peace is created so that, being freed from inner self-conflict, man recovers

that wholeness of personality which is the very image of the person of God'.⁵

In this approach can be seen the influence of New Testament theology, with its emphasis on realized or inaugurated eschatology. This approach also preserves the stress on God's activity and the newness of the Gospel, which was part of the message of Barth and Kraemer. Yet it allows a new concern for the contemporary world because, to the eye of faith, the signs of the Kingdom are already present. Devanandan was especially aware of the significance of independent India's nation-building endeavours, of secularization and of the resurgence of Hinduism. His stress on the politico-social implications of the new creation distinguishes his use of this phrase from Chenchiah's more individualistic interpretation. Devanandan proclaims God's act of new creation in Christ, whereas Chenchiah pleads for new birth in the power of the Spirit. Devanandan puts his message very clearly in the Introduction to his book *Christian Concern in Hinduism*: 'Christian witness in our generation . . . involves our drawing attention through our service, our fellowship and our preaching, to the work of God in the person of Jesus Christ. In him something had been done, something is being carried through, and something is to be finally accomplished for man and creation. This assurance of faith in the New Age that has dawned on world life it is which we seek to communicate'.⁶

Devanandan saw in the building up of a new nation in independent India a sign of the Kingdom. He welcomed the concern for human dignity and personal fulfilment, with its pre-requisite of economic development. He called on Christians to participate in nation-building, and was

very conscious of the fact that the majority of Christians had stood apart from the struggle for independence. He accepted Nehru's aim to create a secular state. This was not to be an anti-religious state, but one which was religiously neutral. He realized, however, that many questions about the cultural influence of Hinduism and the Hindu suspicion of evangelism remained unanswered.

Secularization

Devanandan saw that many of the developments in modern India were liberating. The difficulty, however, is to avoid reading into his remarks the more recent discussion on secularization. In the 1950s, the German theologian Friedrich Gogarten developed Barth's critique of religion and Bonhoeffer's references to man 'come of age'. He saw secularization as a consequence of the Christian faith. For it freed man from mythological and metaphorical bondage and allowed him to explore the secular for his own ends. Secularization gave to the every-day world its autonomy and freed it from magic and superstition. Gogarten distinguished secularization from secularism, which is a new ideology that limits our understanding of the world to contemporary rationalism. Secularism, in Harvey Cox's phrase, 'clips the wings of emancipation'.⁷

It was the Dutch scholar A. T. van Leeuwen who applied this positive understanding of secularization to an appreciation of the missionary task today. The thesis of his remarkable book, *Christianity in World History*, is that the process of secularization is the present form in which the non-Western world is meeting biblical history. In it the prophetic faith in the living God is challenging the traditional ontocratic pattern of Eastern society—by which he means the total identification of the orders of

society with the order of the cosmos. Secularization allows the world its rightful autonomy. The missionary church should co-operate with this process and help to provide liberation from all bondage to those 'ontological' patterns, which hinder true personal existence in the East. The resurgence of Asian religions is irrelevant to this process.

Devanandan died before van Leeuwen's book was published, but he was aware of some of the preceding discussion on secularization.⁸ The essential point where he differs from van Leeuwen is in that he related the spread of secularization to his concern for the resurgence of Hinduism. He recognised the liberating value of secularization and believed that Hinduism must come to terms with this process. Indeed it was part of the Christian task in India to help Hinduism come to terms with secularization. As he wrote in his *Preparation for Dialogue*, 'The real problem in Hindu India is to effect a synthesis between the traditional world-view and contemporary secularism. Thoughtful Hindu leaders are wrestling with this problem and it is in relation to this concern that the good news of God incarnate in Jesus Christ will have to be spelled out.'⁹ Elsewhere he wrote, 'One of the functions of the Christian evangelist in India is not so much to counter forces of secularism and irreligion, but to help Hindus in city and in village, at all levels of culture, to re-define the very nature of what is called religion.'¹⁰

Reconception

In explaining this process of redefinition, Devanandan drew upon the 'reconception' theory of the American, W. Hocking. Hocking, in his *Living Religions and a*

World Faith and *The Coming World Civilization*, argued that the whole trend of global life is towards unity and community of outlook. There is need for a single world-religion. The Christian can envisage it in three ways: 'radical displacement', 'synthesis', and 'reconception'. 'Radical displacement' means a totalitarian claim for Christianity. Christianity must replace the other world religions. 'Synthesis' means that one religion borrows aspects of another religion. The difficulty here is that what is borrowed is inevitably understood in a different sense and context. The third method which Hocking favours is 'reconception'. A religion needs to expand, and to include aspects of other religions. At every stage, a religion remains a complete and shapely whole, making a claim to truth; but it should also be able to grow and broaden its understanding of truth.

Devanandan recognised the all-inclusive character of a religion, which he described as an interplay of creed, cultus and culture. He pleaded, in a period of change, that religions should reconceive the characteristics of their own religion with reference both to the demands of the changing situation and to what the other religions may contain of spiritual treasures. Part of the Christian concern was to evaluate the reconception taking place in Hinduism. This prompted his sympathetic study of the Hindu renaissance. It implied that God's revelation in Christ remains the criterion of religious truth. Indeed he seems to have held that, at the heart of any religion, man is aware of a relationship to that ultimate reality which the Christian knows to be revealed in Christ. He also reintroduced the concept of fulfilment. The climax of the process of reconception in Hinduism is that Hinduism will be fulfilled in Christ. This fulfilment is

not so much a thing of the future; it is already being realized. This is the conviction of faith, and another way of expressing his belief that God is achieving the new creation which was begun in the coming of Christ. The evidence of reconception is, in fact, one of the signs that God is at work making all things new. 'If all "New Creation" can only be of God, where else could these "new" aspects of other beliefs in the thinking and living of people have sprung from?' ¹¹

Despite his faith that God would ultimately achieve His purposes, Devanandan was reluctant to speculate about the future of religions. Yet in a paper read at a Conference of the Fellowship of the Friends of Truth in April 1960, he mentions three possibilities. 'One is to annihilate differences by insisting that all men accept the dogma that every religion leads to the same goal and that there are no differences that matter where religious faith is concerned'.¹² This dogma is really an affirmation of faith which conflicts with the affirmations of faith of, especially, the adherents of the theistic religions. On several occasions Devanandan tried to explain why Christians could not accept this popular neo-Hindu view. The second possibility is to reconcile the differences by 'setting them in the larger frame-work of an evolving world religion'.¹³ Devanandan considered this too artificial and academic. The remaining alternative was to recognise that differences would persist. He accepts Hocking's view that reconception will take place and hopes that the different religions will 'learn to understand and appreciate more intimately the unique identity of the other religions'.¹⁴ Although Devanandan quotes him to support his own view that differences will continue, Hocking's ultimate vision really puts him in the second category.

It was arbitrary of Devanandan to have assumed that those who believe that a world faith is in the making really believe that this can come about 'by piecing together valuable bits from various historic religions'.¹⁵ Rather they believe that this is the ultimate goal of dialogue and reconception.

Devanandan's Attitude to Contemporary Hinduism

Be that as it may, Devanandan was himself a great proponent of dialogue and a careful student of contemporary Hinduism. His assessment of Hindu rethinking was always from the standpoint of biblical truth. In this he showed his continuing debt to Barth and Kraemer, who had made clear that it was theologically illegitimate to adopt a position independent of or superior to other religions. The Christian can only assess other religions from the standpoint of biblical revelation. What is not clear is the extent to which he recognised that the Christian understanding of the biblical revelation is itself developing—that Christianity too shares in the process of reconception.

Although he was sympathetic to renaissant Hinduism, Devanandan believed that it still had inherent theological weaknesses which made it unable to provide an adequate spiritual basis for the new India. Writing in his *Christian Concern in Hinduism*, he noticed the tendency to expound the *Gitā* in theistic terms. 'Even so', he said, 'the stumbling block continues to be the supreme difficulty of putting meaning-content into the term "personal" as applied to God and His relationship with man, especially in view of the "new" significance given in contemporary Hindu society to the concept of the *human* "person" in relation to other persons. The other diffi-

culty arises when the point is made that beyond all the activism, openly admitted as theologically valid, there is the "actionlessness" of mystic *advaitam* (non-duality) of the Finite Self and the Infinite Self, still upheld as the one desirable end of all religious pilgrimage. Even in its theistic form the Vedanta is not able to overcome the problem of reconciling the active life of the temporal here and now with the mystic quietude of the eternal present. Finally, whatever the "emphasis" (or the "de-emphasis"), adherence to the *Vedānta* view of Reality makes almost impossible belief in a doctrine of creation, especially such as would do justice to the reality of God's purposive work in world life as directed towards an End, and to the creative activity of the human person as capable of co-operating with (or retarding) the fulfilment of the Divine purpose in creation. So far the Hindu renascence has given no proof of its awareness of these theological issues.¹⁶

This shows the areas where Devanandan thought Hindu theology was particularly weak. A true recognition of man as a personal being depended, in his view, on a belief in a personal God. Even theistic Hinduism is vague at this point. Without a firmer belief in a personal God, Hinduism could not adequately support the modern concern for human freedom and dignity. The lack of a doctrine of creation meant that the material world was undervalued and that Hinduism had no real sense of history and purpose. Hinduism therefore could not support the modern emphasis on development and planning. In this book, *The Concept of Māyā*,¹⁷ he examines Hindu attempts to interpret this doctrine in a way which allows for the reality of the world, but he finds these defective and makes his own

suggestion. He is critical too of the individualism of Hinduism, which has no place for a church and no understanding of community.

He was aware also of the misunderstanding of Christianity implied in the criticisms of evangelism. He notes the reasons, for example, behind Gandhi's objections. Gandhi suspected that the numerical expansion of the church would mean that a number of people were lost to the nation. Gandhi thought the methods of Christian evangelists were questionable. He said that conversion produced no real change of character in the inner life and that it upset the stability of the social superstructure. Devanandan recognised some truth in these objections, but held that they showed a misunderstanding of the Christian mission. It was not a matter of winning people over to a particular view, but of spreading abroad 'the good news that God has initiated a movement in the history of mankind by Himself entering into this very world of want and violence, of disease and death, of human sin and wilfulness, in order that this whole realm of world-life may be transformed into a veritable new creation in which will be acknowledged the sovereignty of God'.¹⁸ By witness, fellowship and service, the Christian can co-operate in God's work of renewal.

The belief that God had acted in Christ to make all things new was central to Devanandan's thought. It shows the influence of Barth and Kraemer in asserting that the coming of Christ is a new beginning in man's history. The Gospel which Christians are called to proclaim is something quite new from the rest of man's religious history, although Christianity itself shares some of the characteristics of the world religions. Because all

things are being made new, the Gospel is relevant to all men. Hence the need for proclamation, which should be in terms that are meaningful to their fellow countrymen. At the same time, the new creation does not depend upon the new proclamation. The new creation is something that God is initiating and the signs of His activity can be discerned in many developments of the contemporary world.

Yet man can co-operate in God's renewal, and the task of the Church in India is to make people aware of the new creation that is taking place so that they can co-operate with it. This means that Christians in India must understand both the secular and religious developments of their day so that they can evaluate them in terms of their understanding of God's present will for mankind. For, by their involvement in contemporary life they can influence the course of social thought and world events so that 'the working of God's will is discerned and given the right of way'.¹⁹ Devanandan's involvement was itself an example, and he inspired others to a similar concern. Certain questions, however, remain. The first is whether his understanding of the Gospel does justice to the varied understandings of Christ and the different eschatologies to be found in the New Testament. Secondly, there is the question raised implicitly by van Leeuwen and also by David Edwards in his *Religion and Change* as to whether the resurgence of world religions is of any lasting significance.²⁰ It is also open to doubt whether the future of Hinduism lies with renaissance Hinduism or whether there is more vitality than Devanandan thought in traditional Hinduism.

III

READINESS FOR DIALOGUE

Devanandan did much to stimulate Christians into re-thinking their relationship to Hinduism. In recent years a variety of conferences and groups have met to discuss the Christian attitude to Hinduism. A number of reports and statements have been issued. Obviously the membership and context of these conferences have varied, but the statements give a guide to the changing outlook. They are, as it were, a measure against which to compare the writings of more original thinkers.

The Nagpur Seminar

In 1958 a Seminar was held at Nagpur on the general theme, 'The Christian Approach to Renascent Hinduism'. Some twenty-five people attended, most of whom were connected with Indian theological colleges. For part of the conference, the members divided into two groups and the findings of both commissions were published in *Religion and Society* for February 1959.

The theme of the First Commission's report was 'A Christian Interpretation of Renascent Hinduism'. There are three sections: 'The Christian Standpoint', 'Affirmations and Concerns of Renascent Hinduism' and 'A Christian Attitude towards these Concerns and Affirmations'. In the first section it is made clear that the Commission's starting-point is the Christian faith. 'We are aware that there are other approaches to the universal phenomenon

of religion, but members of the Church are bound to interpret all religions in the light of Christ the Lord, crucified and risen.¹ The report then goes on to recognise that God is concerned with all men and that there are signs of his activity in non-Christian religions. It also reflects the critical view of religion which characterised the thought of Barth and Kraemer. 'God is concerned with all men and is at work among them. Evidences of His activity are to be found in man's religious quest, but the forms of this quest are entangled in man's rebellion. In the practice of all religions, including Christianity, God's gifts are used against God. There is no easy way of discerning and interpreting the activity of God in one religion or another... Nevertheless, we are obligated to seek to discriminate, in the light of Christ, between what is of God, and what is not, however partial this evaluation may be... We recognise that there are elements in non-Christian movements which are tokens of God's activity.'²

The second section says that Christians need a deeper understanding of contemporary Hinduism. Some recent movements are described. Members of the commission admit their perplexity, but say, 'We dimly perceive in this new movement not merely the workings of human ingenuity but also the deep stirrings of the Spirit of God.'³ Yet, despite this, in the third section, the Report says the Church has the continuing task of commending the claim of Jesus Christ the Living Lord. The Vedānta view of religion is rejected and the call for conversion is upheld. In brief whilst the Commission is aware of and sympathetic to contemporary developments in Hinduism, there is no modification of the Christian understanding of its evangelistic task.

The Second Commission's report is entitled, 'The Basis and Content of a Christian-Hindu dialogue'. Again there are three sections: 'Why a Christian-Hindu Conversation?', 'The Christian in the Conversation' and 'The Content of the Conversation'. The first section affirms that God in Christ has created and redeemed *all* mankind. The context of communication arises from the common humanity that the Christian shares with his Hindu fellow-citizen and the fact that together they 'live under the Lordship of Christ, whether this Lordship is acknowledged or not'.⁴ Christians should come out of their 'timid seclusion'.⁵ In the second section, it is admitted that the Christian approach to the Hindu has often been unworthy. 'We shall expect to learn from our Hindu friend, we shall expect Christ to speak to us as to him'.⁶ The Commission goes on to say, 'Our easy assumption that God works among us Christians alone is plainly and openly called in question by the creativeness which has been given in our own country to those outside the Church'.⁷ The third section says that the conversation may be formal or informal. It urges greater study of renascent Hinduism and the development of 'whatever contacts are possible'.⁸

The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men

The World Council of Churches and International Missionary Council study project has already been mentioned. In 1961 a statement called 'The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men' was issued, which summed up the findings to date. The statement recognises that 'the religions of Asia are living realities'.⁹ A significant discovery is 'the new emphasis laid in all religions on the fact of our common humanity'.¹⁰ A theological re-

statement is needed, although it is 'too early to anticipate what form such a restatement may take'.¹¹ Christians cannot claim any superiority in themselves, rather they point to the new creation in Jesus Christ. We should be free, the statement says, to 'make full use of the language, the thought-forms, the customs and the ethos we find in the religious heritage of our country, without anxiety about distinguishing between "kernel" and "husk"'. A new appraisal of syncretism is needed. It is recognised that God is at work in the contemporary religious changes. In the consultations some spoke of the redemptive activity of God even within other faiths while others preferred to speak of God's forbearance with mankind because of His plan of salvation and that 'the Gospel of His kingdom should be proclaimed to all men'.¹² Finally the report outlines certain practical implications.

It is a pity that the remarks about a theological restatement are not developed. This is perhaps inevitable in a statement summing up the findings of several consultations. The need to get beyond 'theoretical alternatives such as continuity and discontinuity or general and special revelation' is welcomed.¹³ The report shows a recognition that God is at work in the world religions, but it does not tackle the theological implications of this discovery.

The Christian Encounter with Men of Other Beliefs

In 1964 a Commission of the East Asia Christian Conference adopted a statement called 'The Christian Encounter with Men of Other Beliefs'. Although its reference is wider than Hinduism, the fact that some Indians were involved in its production and that it

appeared in *Religion and Society* (June 1964), makes it relevant to our study. Encounter arises from the fact that Christians meet with others in the business of daily life. Reflecting the 'Barthian' suspicion of 'religion', it is said that religion may not be the point of meeting. 'The conversation about the Christian faith is often most meaningfully conducted in the simple perspective of men in their secular lives.'¹⁴ The universal concern of God is affirmed.

The most interesting part of the statement is Section 3, which deals with the 'Nature of the Conversation'. Accepting the view that a religion has a total understanding of life, it is said that each religion has its own understanding of man. 'The question which is posed for Christians is how they reconcile their own position as witnesses to the truth in Jesus Christ with the necessity of subjecting themselves to that process of mutual correction and learning which belongs to a conversation when it is truly open.'¹⁵ The certainty of Christian truth is affirmed, but also the need for real conversation. The necessity of understanding the beliefs and practices of others is stressed. It is recognised that there is common ground in the questions to which men are seeking answers. Christians must so share 'with others a common secular life that there is established with them a relation of friendship and mutuality'.¹⁶ There is also room for co-operation in service to the community as a whole. All this will open up the possibility of conversation, although it involves risk. It is faith in the New Creation in Christ which allows the Christian to be open to others and to discern the working of God 'wherever it may be, whether through the religious or secular life'.¹⁷ The statement ends with a sentence which strikes a balance, although at

the expense of clarity. 'The dialogical situation within which the Christian encounter takes place is characterised, therefore, by the Universality of the Gospel as it encompasses all men, the Mutuality that is promised when the dialogue takes place in honest and loving openness, and the Finality of Christ Himself who alone is Lord.'¹⁸

It is doubtful whether the statement carried 'the discussion on a Theology of Dialogue to a creative stage of development'¹⁹ as is suggested in *Religion and Society*. Several ideas such as the suspicion of religion ('religion can be the sphere of the demonic'²⁰) and the view that each religion or ideology is a complete whole are not new. There is great anxiety lest the finality and uniqueness of Christ should be in any way compromised. It is not clear whether conversation and dialogue is of value in itself or is really a new method of evangelism. The most interesting point is the suggestion that the real meeting place is the common humanity and not religion. This is an issue that has come to the fore in more recent discussion. It bubbled up, for example, at the 1965 Biennial Council of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, which included a consultation on the 'Christian Basis, Meaning and Scope of Inter-Faith Dialogue'. The report notes that 'there was serious debate . . . whether dialogue between adherents of other faiths should be promoted primarily at the level of interiarity or at the level of a common responsibility for the secular historical situation which men of different religions face in India today'.²¹

Nasrapur Consultation

In March 1966 a National Consultation on 'The Mission of the Church in Contemporary India' was held at

Nasrapur. The findings are not particularly original. The need for the Church to rethink its mission is recognised. Four reasons are given for this: the understanding of mission as witness to Jesus Christ rather than as church-extension; greater appreciation of India's cultural heritage; the renewal of classical religions; and common concern for nation-building. God's concern for all is accepted, although religion is still spoken of as rebellion. Perhaps more interesting is the way in which the recognition that God's saving work is not limited to the Church is combined with the belief that there is salvation only in Jesus Christ. Section 3 is introduced with the statement 'There is salvation only in Jesus Christ, and wherever men are redeemed from the power of sin and receive God's saving grace, it is through him.'²² In explaining this it is said that the saving work of Christ is not limited to the organised Christian church. 'He works where he wills. It is not for us to judge the manner and place of his working. The Christian should be sensitive in discerning his presence and his acts. Changes have taken place in the practices and interpretations of India's old religions, and people have been liberated in many instances from oppressive bondages. Changes are still going on. Christ is at work here.'²³ Section 6—which is headed 'The participation in religious ceremonies of other religions is both opportunity to express solidarity with the society in which we live and danger of betraying Jesus Christ'—shows the tension within the Consultation. The difficulty which is reflected in this section and elsewhere is of combining an appreciative understanding of other religions with unambiguous commitment to the uniqueness of Jesus. The need to

analyse the meaning of uniqueness is not in evidence nor is there any discussion of the Cosmic or Unknown Christ.

Consultation at Kandy

The consultation at Kandy, Ceylon, in 1967 again takes us beyond the Indian situation. A third of the participants were Asians and there was some Roman Catholic participation. God's concern for all men is asserted. The basis for dialogue is both human solidarity and the fact that all mankind is being caught up in one universal history. The Christian realises that Christ died for all men. It is said that Christ is present in sincere dialogue and that he can speak to the Christian through his neighbour.

Three points are of particular interest. Secularization is seen as increasing the need and opportunity for dialogue; 'it does not render inter-faith discussion obsolete, but adds a dimension to its significance'.²⁴ Secondly, there is an attempt to explain the relation of dialogue and proclamation. They are not identical but related. Thirdly, there is an admission of disagreement about the significance of the developments within other religions. The statement says, early on, 'As our dialogue with men of other faiths develops, we may gain light regarding the place held by other religious traditions in God's purposes for them and for us. This is a question which cannot be answered *a priori* or academically, but must continue to engage our earnest study and reflection'.²⁵ Again at the end it is said, 'We are not agreed among ourselves whether or not it is part of God's redemptive purposes to bring about an increasing manifestation of the Saviour within other systems of belief as such'.²⁶

Consultation at Bombay

The last Consultation which we shall consider was held at Bombay in January 1969. It was organised jointly by the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society and the Roman Catholic Institute of Indian Culture. This is itself significant. There were four workshops, each of which produced a report.

The first workshop reported on 'Dialogue as Interpersonal communication: The Common Starting Point of Hindu-Christian Dialogue'. Dialogue is defined as 'a collaboration of persons based upon attitudes of mutual acceptance and respect for each other's integrity and a shared desire for growth in truth'.²⁷ When people meet for religious dialogue, they are usually committed, but hope for development and a 'break-through into a yet deeper commitment'.²⁸ It is suggested that a common starting point could be found in anthropology and the report goes on to consider the different views of man which are current in India. There was discussion on whether the ancient distinction, which was made by *Upādhyāya*, between *saṃāj dharma* or cultural Hinduism and *sādhana* or the search for salvation could be reviewed, and several specific points were considered. One of interest is that it was felt legitimate to provide Hindus, Muslims and others with education in their own religion at Christian schools and colleges. The difficulty created for dialogue by the Hindu demand for the recognition of the equality of all religions is mentioned, but it is said that the atmosphere is changing and making it more possible for both parties to respect each other's core of commitment. The emphasis should be on equality of persons rather than of religions.

The second workshop reported on 'Dialogue as a Concern of Christian Theology'. It says that dialogue is more than an intellectual exercise; it is a sharing in religious experience, in which Christ is present. It requires an openness which will accept enrichment and correction from the other. There must also be honesty so that one's own convictions are not concealed. 'Dialogue can be described as the service of truth and concern for truth; . . . Each brings his own experience of truth, but is always aware that his conception is imperfect and calls for completion. So, without losing hold of what we have received, we must be ready to go onward into new discoveries.'²⁹

The basis for dialogue is threefold: the increasing unity of mankind; our 'common experience of the need of salvation, for healing in the heart, the healing of personal relationships and of society at large', and God's single plan of salvation in and through Jesus Christ.³⁰ The report then goes on to consider whether the Gospel demands only proclamation, or whether it also allows for dialogue. Dialogue finds its deepest foundation in the dialogue which God has instituted with mankind in Jesus Christ. Dialogue is sharing in religious experience and the Christian brings his experience of Christ. 'The partner has also something to give. For, according to the Bible, God spoke also to men outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition. His word therefore may in some manner have come to sages and saints and peoples of all ages and climes; it may be found recorded in their sacred books. Contact with these scriptures and dialogue with men who live by them can lead to a deeper and larger understanding of our own experience of the Gospel. For Christ can give us through the other a new insight, and

an interpretation of Himself.³¹ 'On the other hand, scriptures of other faiths may come to be better understood and interpreted by confrontation with the Gospel. This, we believe, is actually happening around us.'³² Dialogue is not just a formal exercise for experts, but occurs in the daily stream of life. The report clearly distinguishes dialogue from evangelization. 'Dialogue is a way of being together, an interpersonal relationship and communion.'³³ The report then goes on to suggest that greater attention might be given to Negative Theology, as it would bring Christians 'into deepening dialogical communion with the advaitic spiritual tradition of India'.³⁴ There is also an interesting discussion of the Christian mystical tradition as a basis for dialogue. It is recognised that the conflict between a personal mysticism of communion and the so-called mysticism of absorption exists in both Hindu and Christian traditions. Caution is advised in rejecting advaitic experience or overstressing the distinction.

The third workshop reported on 'The Basis for Dialogue in Hindu *Darsanas*'. It looks at various aspects of Hinduism and in an imaginative and sympathetic way suggests possible areas of dialogue.

'The Goal of Hindu-Christian Dialogue' is the subject of the fourth workshop's report. Dialogue is said to be primarily a meeting of human beings and stems from a 'profound recognition of the mutuality of our common life'—a rather different emphasis to that of the second workshop. The report makes very clear that dialogue is an end in itself. 'We would underline this element of real reciprocity and complete mutuality in all genuine dialogue. The enrichment it brings is mutual... Dialogue has no ulterior or extrinsic purpose. We cannot use it

for private ends or manipulate it without destroying the spirit of dialogue.'³⁵ The report goes on to consider dialogue and mission. Jesus Christ is God's Word to all men and the members of the Church are called to be God's instruments in the divine-human dialogue. 'We do not understand evangelization as aiming at the transferring of people from one religious-cultural community . . . to another community. . . . We would rather understand evangelization as the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ with our fellowmen.'³⁶ Occasion for evangelization, in the sense of direct proclamation of the *kerygma*, may be given in dialogue, but it cannot be contrived. It is then suggested that there are many opportunities for common action. 'Such collaboration is both an aspect of dialogue and an opportunity for dialogue.'³⁷

Finally, the fourth report asks 'Does Dialogue Aim at Establishing a Universal Religion?' To prejudge the issue or to set specific goals would be to infringe the openness of dialogue. Christianity needs renewal and fulfilment, and that is true of other religions as well. This fulfilment can only come through the work of Christ, who is the Lord of all things. 'In dialogue we remain open to the working of the Spirit. It is a quest of faith and obedience and it springs from the conviction that Christ is Lord of all things. It does not, and indeed cannot, aim at the establishment of a new universal religion. But we are sustained by the scriptural assurance that God will sum up all things in him and that Christ will be the centre of whatever emerges out of our dialogue with men of other faiths.'³⁸ The question is not really answered. Rather, the awareness that all religions are changing is combined with the conviction of faith that

Christ is Lord of All. Yet there is the hint of a more universal religion, of which Christ will be the centre.

East Asia Christian Conference Statement

One further statement deserves study. It was drawn up in July 1970 by the Secretariat for Inter-Faith Dialogue of the East Asia Christian Conference. It is a response to the new initiative being taken in this field by the World Council of Churches, which arranged an inter-faith consultation at Ajaltoun, Lebanon, in March, 1970. Again this statement takes us beyond India, but this, of itself, points to the fact that the whole discussion is becoming increasingly international.

The introductory section says that there is growing contact and dialogue between men of different faiths and ideologies. At the same time an emerging universal consciousness is impatient of barriers and conflicts between human groups. An increasing number of Christians are making positive assessments of other faiths and of secular humanism and even of atheism.

Dialogue is described largely as 'a matter of human relations.'³⁹ Meeting in depth on subjects of common concern which are not explicitly religious is an integral part of inter-faith dialogue. It is accepted that Christ's presence may be discerned everywhere. Serious inter-faith dialogue is not, as some Christians fear, an invitation to betray Christ, but 'demands a radical and existential conversion to Christ and life in Christ.'⁴⁰

Conclusion

Other reports and meetings could be mentioned, but these are enough to substantiate that the attitude to other religions has become increasingly open. There is less

anxiety about compromising the finality of Christ and of the risk involved in dialogue. Dialogue is now seen to have its own inherent value and is not regarded as a new form of evangelization. It is recognised that the Christian as part of his commitment has a certain belief about Jesus Christ and this is part of what he brings to the dialogue, but the purpose of dialogue is a common search for truth. Dialogue is distinct from proclamation, although it may sometimes give occasion for it. Proclamation itself, in any case, is now seen more as pointing to what God is believed to have done in Christ, rather than as the effort to make converts. The freedom of those addressed by the Gospel to respond in their own way is more widely accepted.

There is still tension between those who stress the common humanity as the basis for dialogue and those who put the emphasis on sharing religious experience. Most would not now see the one as excluding the other. Dialogue is an appropriate approach to all men, but it has particular relevance to inter-faith understanding. The 'Barthian' view of religion as rebellion has been fading into the background.

Although it is widely accepted that God is active in other religions and can speak through their adherents, there is still debate about the Christian assessment of this. Some would still stress the Christian task of evaluating these developments, others think more of Christ being discovered within the world religions. This, when Christ is not identified with Christianity, can lead to the hope that religions will eventually grow together with Christ as their centre.

IV

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTION

It is since the Second Vatican Council that Roman Catholic writers have started to take a full place in the on-going discussion. The Council, however, in fact only confirmed and gave wide publicity to the views already being expounded by some Catholic thinkers.

Cuttat

A pioneer in this field was Jacques Albert Cuttat, who, for a time, was Swiss Ambassador at Delhi. His thinking influenced the group which included Murray Rogers and Swami Abhishiktānanda, of whom further mention is made in the next chapter. His *La Rencontre des Religions* appeared in 1957 and was translated into English in 1960.

There are, he says, two approaches to Comparative Religion. One is to observe with a certain detachment, the other is to approach the various creeds from and through one of them. This is the approach Cuttat adopts. The aim of his study is two-fold. It seeks to show that the meeting of religions is a providential invitation for religionists to re-examine and review their own dogmas so as 'to rediscover implicit or potential dimensions within it, or to open up new horizons from the vantage point of their own religion'.¹ The other aim is to warn against the dangerous temptations present in the meeting of religions.

The danger, of which he is particularly conscious, is of a universalism which ignores religious differences. He

quotes Radhakrishnan's dream of a universal religion, which he describes as the synthetic flower of a tolerant evolutionism, and says that 'the humanistic aspiration toward a gradual merging of existing creeds runs against the spiritual sensitivity of both hemispheres and it is unable to quote any sacred writings of the East or the West as authority because, in the final analysis, it reckons without God'.² The religions are not more or less equivalent—nor are the differences only matters of degree. The spiritual evolution of mankind is the history of concrete and reciprocal relationships between God and man. 'The ardent wish to make mankind better and happier through the unification of all religions is one thing; and fervent intercession for the union of all souls in the sanctifying love of the revealed God is another.'³ The first, he regards, as a subtle temptation of Lucifer. The positive purpose of his book is to discern God's plan in man's spiritual history—to bring it all within his Christocentric vision.

There are, Cuttat says, two views of the world. The monotheistic tradition sees the world as the creation of a Personal Being. The metaphysical tradition of the Orient sees the world as a manifestation or perpetual reflection of a co-existent Eternity. These two spiritual dimensions are the only authentic possibilities. The one cannot be reduced to the other. Their mere apposition would contradict the transcendent unity of God as well as the immanent unity of human nature. The unity requires that the two dimensions are seen as being fundamentally complementary. His argument, he claims, will show that 'the metaphysical perspective cannot subordinate the monotheistic viewpoint without eventually depriving it of its essential elements—personal transcendency, gratui-

tousness of Grace, supreme value of Love—whereas monotheistic revelation is capable of embracing the Eastern perspective, in such a way that the true essence of the latter is not only preserved but actually heightened'.⁴

The basis of his claim is that the extreme interiority of the Spirit culminates in the extreme transcendency of the Creator. 'The more consciousness grows deep and centred, the more it becomes permeable to the presence of the transcendent Divinity'.⁵ Interiorization does not itself create a meeting with Grace. It can prepare for it: but Grace depends on divine initiative. It comes from God and this fact gives a providential significance to the meeting of Biblical monotheism with Oriental religions. He gives examples from Oriental religions of the way in which interiorization prepares for the presence of the personal God—in the development of Buddhism, in the thought of Rāmānuja, and in the life of Al-Hallaj.

Cuttat's book is significant for its recognition of a divine providence working in the development of the world religions. 'It is incumbent upon us to include the religions past and present of the Orient in our vision of the world as a "Sacred History" and to ask ourselves in what sense the destiny of Oriental souls is also Christocentric'.⁶ He accepts that non-Christians are open to the presence of the personal God. 'The West is not fully aware of the omnipresence of the Word'.⁷ He believes that Christianity can recover its interiority from contact with the East. 'With increasing clearness', he says, 'the originality, the beauty and the depth of Oriental spirituality, so close to monotheistic contemplation through its sense of the absolute value of the Sacred, presents itself to Western man as a mirror which invites and helps

him to rediscover forgotten aspects of his own revelation, to develop some of its implicit modalities and above all to re-emphasize certain neglected demands of the Christian vocation'.⁸

It is through such interiority that Christians can meet those of other faiths in depth. This is his Golden Rule of Comparative Religion: 'The more deeply I go into my own religion the more I become capable of penetrating and assimilating the core, the really positive content, of other religious perspectives'.⁹ This attitude alone provides the 'sacred ground' for a meeting which is both truly religious and a genuine dialogue. The comparative study of religions requires the '*epokhe*, or phenomenological reduction, i.e., the suspension of judgment—including the judgment of existence—in front of the thing itself, in order to let it speak'.¹⁰ This is not a surrender of one's convictions, but 'merely "placing in parenthesis" their incidental modalities'.¹¹ This willingness to listen to other spiritual traditions, in their totality, without *a priori* considerations and the search for the sacred ground of real meeting have had an important influence on the groups of which Murray Rogers and Swami Abhishiktananda are, in a sense, the spokesmen.

Religious Hinduism

A more representative book is *Religious Hinduism*. It consists of articles by several Jesuit scholars. They were first published as a series of monthly 'letters' between July 1957 and June 1959, and then published in a revised and enlarged book edition in 1964. The Preface to the Third Edition of 1968 says that the documents from the Ecumenical Council of Vatican II 'have officially confirmed and sanctioned the stand taken by our

team'.¹² It adds that the writers and others had long been engaged in the kind of encounter and dialogue for which the Council calls.

The position of the writers is explained by Fr. Fallon in the Introduction, which was provided for the Second Edition. In trying to define the correct attitude which a Christian should adopt towards non-Christian religions, he dismisses two views as definitely un-Christian: that of the indifferentist and of the fanatic. Fr. Fallon points out that the Christian must remember that his faith is a divine gift and not a human achievement. 'The transcendence of Christianity is not synonymous with the transcendent intelligence or virtue of any particular Christian or groups of Christians.'¹³ He then suggests that the relationship should be examined from a double viewpoint: natural and supernatural. On the natural plane of reason non-Christian doctrines contain much that is sound and true. He rejects the view that natural reason can know nothing of God. On the supernatural plane, grace is not confined to Christians. 'God's grace has never been absent from the history of man.'¹⁴ 'While studying non-Christian religions, a Christian discovers many evidences of this age-long work of grace in the hearts of men.'¹⁵ The search is also in some measure a finding. The Church teaches that supernatural sanctity is possible beyond the limits of the Christian fold. Fr. Fallon also mentions the influence that Christianity has exercised on other religions.

For these reasons, therefore, the Christian cannot totally reject non-Christian religions. Fr. Fallon believes that all must be gathered and consummated in Christ: but 'the catholic unity towards which all the religious aspirations of men converge is to be found only through

a process of death and rebirth'.¹⁶ The Christ who is to be revealed is prefigured in the images and symbols of non-Christian religions. The Christian therefore approaches them seeking to probe deeper into the mystery of divine grace. He does not compromise the truth nor adopt a friendly approach as a matter of policy. By a sympathetic approach he will deepen his understanding of Christianity and be able to gain a more penetrating knowledge of other religions. He sees that the salvific grace of Christ the only Saviour already reaches non-Christians. 'It reaches them *not in spite of* their non-Christian religions but by using, it would seem, the very elements of genuine truth and goodness that are present in these religions'.¹⁷ The recognition that the non-Christian religions are themselves means of salvation is significant. The passage is worth quoting: 'For many a non-Christian his religion appears to be the means and the way which God's grace uses to reach him in his present situation'.¹⁸ God's grace is not withheld from those who sincerely travel along ways which are not *the Way*. 'Their scriptures, their rites, their traditions, the lessons and examples of their teachers and saints are means which God's Providence permits for their religious growth and progress, and which His grace uses until they can hear and understand the call of Christ'.¹⁹ Yet, Fr. Fallon insists, non-Christian lives and aspirations, however noble, remain incomplete until fulfilled in Christ. A positive approach to non-Christian religions does not, therefore, in any way lessen the missionary zeal of the Christian.

The book itself is a careful and sympathetic study of many aspects of Hinduism. It is undertaken in the spirit of Fr. Fallon's Introduction. In each chapter some aspect

of Hinduism is expounded; the positive value is noted and the deficiencies when compared with the Christian revelation observed. At the same time there is a desire that the Indian Church should purify itself so that it can become a 'true home for all in India'.²⁰

Christian Revelation and World Religions

Another book, *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, also shows that Vatican II confirmed what forward-looking Roman Catholic scholars were already saying. This book contains the papers given at a Conference held in Bombay in November 1964 on 'Christian Revelation and Non-Christian Religions'. It also contains the conclusions formulated at the end of the Conference. The Conference brought together Indian theologians and scholars from overseas.

Before looking at the individual papers, it will be useful to consider the Conference's conclusions, which are divided into four sections. The first section deals with 'The World Religions in God's Plan of Salvation'. It says that the world religions cannot be understood in the light of the misleading axiom '*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*'. They have to be considered from a theo-centric point of view. 'The whole of mankind is embraced by the one salvific plan of God which includes all the world religions'.²¹ All men and all religions are under God's grace. They are not just natural theology. They contain truth, which comes from God, but this truth 'needs to be liberated by Christ from entanglement in error and sin'.²² The second section answers the question 'How can non-Christians find salvation in their own Religions?' It starts from the assumption, which had been explicitly declared in Vatican II's 'Constitution on the Church',

that non-Christians can be saved in their own non-Christian religions. There are, it says, only two fundamental and opposed positions of an adult before God: 'self-centred love, or man's openness towards the acceptance of God'.²³ 'This commitment takes place under the influence of the inner attraction of the Holy Spirit in the context of various social, cultural and religious influences'.²⁴ The third section deals with *The Mission and the Non-Christian Religious World*. Any idea of conquest is disowned. Mission is the humble offering of God's saving truth and love to free human beings. The missionary, it is said, 'should view each man in the totality of his religious tradition and environment, and consider the non-Christian religions as the historical way to God for their followers, in the expectation of the mystery of death and life through which every created and sinful reality has to pass'.²⁵ Service should be in the spirit of dialogue, in which each party listens to God in himself and in the other. The fourth section is entitled 'The Relation of Christians to their non-Christian Surroundings'. It says that a Christian cannot, in a religiously pluralistic world, live in proud isolation, but must consciously collaborate with the work of Christ. There was also discussion about taking part in Hindu worship and as to whether, in Catholic schools and colleges, non-Christian children should be encouraged in their own faith.

Before the Conclusions were published, inaccurate reports circulated in some newspapers and magazines.²⁶ Fr. Neuner, therefore, in his Introduction tries to clarify the position. The starting-point is the twofold doctrine of the Church that she is sent to teach all nations but that people who do not belong to the visible Church can

be saved. Accepting the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, the question arises, How can they be saved? Fr. Neuner bases his answer on the Church's teaching that all men are faced with the same fundamental choice of love of self or love of God. This fundamental decision is made under the influence of grace and those who respond positively are connected with Christ through invisible bonds. In many situations, the most a missionary can do is to help people make this fundamental choice, although the Gospel must still be preached where this is possible and meaningful. Fr. Neuner then asks whether men make this fundamental choice independently of their religious traditions. He asserts that it is only God who saves, but does 'God use the religious traditions of the non-Christian world in the fulfilment of his will of salvation which extends to all people?'²⁷ The world religions are ambiguous. They contain truth which comes from God, but this truth is distorted by human sin and error. 'These religions may influence man in two opposed ways; against a true commitment to God, if he permits his will to be determined by the error and sin contained in them; or they may lead him to God, if he allows himself to be guided by the inspiration of truth he finds in them.'²⁸ Fr. Neuner points out that there is a difference between the intimate religious attitude of people and their philosophical ideas—but the former is deeper than people's formulas. He mentions some of the good and bad elements in Hinduism. He then quotes Hans Küng who compares the number of Christians with the vast masses of people outside the Church and calls the non-Christian religions the 'ordinary way' of salvation. Fr. Neuner, although admitting that some may quarrel with the terminology, explains Hans Küng's argument.

'If God wants their salvation, and if in fact the great majority has to work out its final destiny in the context of its socio-cultural surroundings, then its religion is the ordinary way towards God for those who profess it.'²⁹

Other religions are not rivals. They are pre-Christian rather than non-Christian. They express the religious situation of mankind in the time of Advent, before Christ. 'The fact that now Jesus Christ has come does not change the situation of these people so long as they do not come into real contact with him and so fail to see the relevance for them of his coming and of his death and resurrection.'³⁰ Even those who meet missionaries or know the Church seldom encounter Jesus Christ in an adequate way. Christians can however strengthen others' personal commitment to God, even when they cannot yet be brought to full communion with Christ and in the Church. In doing this, should one try to detach them from their religious traditions, or help them to find the right orientation in the midst of their religious world, which is ambivalent? This is an unresolved question.

Are we then, Fr. Neuner asks, implying that the aim is to make them better Hindus instead of leading them to Christ? 'One might answer,' he writes, 'if you understand "Hindu" as a man who is closed to Christ and opposed to the Church, certainly not. If you mean a man who is on the way to God and guided by his grace, is engaged in the decisive task of his life to find the right fundamental option, and has to do this within the framework of his own religious tradition, then the answer is yes. But then you are not allowed to add the alternative: "Instead of leading him to Christ". He *is* on the way to Christ, and is ready to go as far as his conscience

leads him, and you are helping him to do so, because you are a true missionary'.³¹

Neuner ends by denying any intention of undermining the missionary motivation. All ideas of conquest must be abandoned. The Church offers the Gospel, fully respecting the 'intimate sphere of human freedom where man encounters God and where he must find faith'.³² As the new and deeper understanding of the Church is appreciated, so the need for missions will be realized and the true missionary spirit recovered.

Neuner's Introduction is largely a summary of the four articles and it is not necessary to describe them in detail. The basic position of the writers is clear. They hold that all people are confronted with the same fundamental choice of loving God or loving self. The choice is made under the influence of the grace of God, which may reach people through the non-Christian religions. The non-Christian religions are ambiguous. They contain truth which comes from God, but it is distorted by human sin and error. The task of the Church is to offer Christ so that in God's good time the other religions may die and rise to fulfilment. For this is part of God's plan of uniting all things in Christ. All ideas of missionary conquest are abandoned and respect for human freedom is complete. Clearly this is a position based on a Christian standpoint. It recognises the universality of God's grace and His purpose of bringing all things to unity in Christ. What is missing perhaps is a sense of the ambiguity of Christianity itself and the hope that the Church will itself be enriched as other religions die and rise again in Christ.

Bede Griffiths

Bede Griffiths is another writer whose thought was moving along lines approved at the Vatican Council. His *Christian Ashram* was not published until 1966, by which time the Secretariat for non-Christian religions had been established in Rome. Yet some of the articles in the book go back at least to August 1963, when he was asked to speak at Santa Fé in New Mexico.

Bede Griffiths was a monk of Prinknash Abbey and Prior of Farnborough Abbey before he went to India in 1955. There, with a companion, he founded Kurisumala Ashram, a contemplative ecumenical community in Kerala, South India. The Ashram, which uses the West Syrian rite of Antioch, has adapted monastic traditions to an Indian way of life. 'It was our desire', says Bede Griffiths, 'to enter into this tradition of Indian *sannyāsa* and to establish a Christian ashram, in which the life of prayer and asceticism could be followed along Christian lines, yet keeping always in touch with the traditions of India'.³³

Bede Griffiths protests about the westernness of the Church in India. She has always 'presented herself to the eastern world in the form of an alien culture'.³⁴ He gives various examples, one of which may be quoted. 'In the East when anyone enters a holy place, he invariably removes his shoes. But when one of our Indian priests approaches the altar, he is instructed to put on shoes and socks. In that simple fact is a measure of the gulf which still separates the Church from the people of the East.'³⁵ He stresses the importance of the Indian church adapting itself to Indian culture and says that the first requirement for the Christian missionary today is that he should have an adequate knowledge of the religion of the people among whom he is living.

The need is for a new approach to the other religions. He likens this to the ecumenical movement. 'There is need now for an ecumenical movement in religion, by which we seek to discover what is the common ground in the different religious traditions of mankind and then in the light of this understanding to comprehend all these different religious traditions in their vital relationship to the living Christ.'³⁶ The old attitude that condemned other religions as false must be abandoned. The study of comparative religion has shown that there is no form of religion which does not contain some elements of truth. There is a continuous tradition from the primitive revelation which is partly preserved in every authentic form of religion. Sometimes it is very corrupted, sometimes it is preserved with remarkable purity. In the great religions the primitive tradition has 'been developed with a wonderful insight and, in its purest forms, it comes astonishingly close to Christianity'.³⁷ We are dealing, he says, not with a false religion but 'with a true religion, which has been distorted in certain respects and lost its integrity, but which nevertheless remains an authentic witness to the eternal truth'.³⁸ Other religions can be seen as a providential preparation for Christianity. The concept of natural religion is misleading. The basis of all the eastern traditions is the idea of a transcendent, yet immanent Being, who is known not by reason, but by revelation. This can be linked to the traditional Christian doctrine that there is a universal revelation of God, which was made in the beginning to all men. Christians should recognise that there is an 'element of genuine supernatural revelation in all the great religious traditions'.³⁹ They should approach people

of other faiths not as enemies but as friends who share in part the truth which Christians are called to preach.

Bede Griffiths devotes one chapter to discussing the problem of the salvation of the unbeliever. On the one hand Christians believe that Christ is the only saviour, but the number of believers has always been a tiny minority of the world's population. Using Fr. Danielou's book, *Holy Pagans of the Old Testament*, he says that according to biblical doctrine, salvation has never been confined to Christians or Jews. All men were included in God's covenant with Adam and Noah. The basic content of the primitive revelation is God and His readiness to reward those who seek Him.⁴⁰ Islam is the perfect example of the cosmic revelation. Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims cannot be called unbelievers, but should be recognised as brothers in Christ. Even agnostics and atheists should not be judged by their professed views, but by the fundamental orientation of their intellect and will. 'What we can say with certainty', writes Bede Griffiths, 'is that at all times and in all places God (and that means Christ) is soliciting the heart and mind of every man through his reason and conscience, and all alike, believers and unbelievers, are to be judged by this hidden call of grace and their response to it'.⁴¹ 'We thus reach the rather paradoxical conclusion, though it is theologically certain, that it is not by his outward profession of faith, whether he is Christian or Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, agnostic or atheist, that man is saved, but by his response to the call of grace, which comes to every man secretly in every religious or irreligious state.'⁴² Salvation is available to all, provided they do not deliberately reject God's grace.

Bede Griffiths insists that the real point of meeting must be in mystical experience. Hinduism seeks to know God, to experience the reality of God in the depths of the soul. It is at this level that Hindus and Christians have to meet, so that they can find out what they have in common and where the real differences lie. 'It is in union with God—beyond images and concepts—in the ground of the soul that the true meeting must take place.'⁴³

In this meeting, Bede Griffiths holds that both Christian and Hindu have much to learn. The Hindu experience of God has been so overwhelming that he has found it difficult to maintain the reality of this world. 'We have to show the Hindu in the light of our faith that in this ultimate experience of God, the absolute being, the world and the soul are not lost, nor is the personal being of God absorbed in the impersonal God-head. It is precisely in this ground of our being, in the real self, that in our Christian experience we discover the personal relationship which exists between ourselves and God and between one another.'⁴⁴ The Christian should not deny what is ultimate in the Hindu's experience, but assure him that in this experience the world and the soul are not lost. 'There is a real creation, a real fall, a real redemption.'⁴⁵ Bede Griffiths also holds that until the historicity of Christ is accepted, he cannot have a true birth in the Indian soul. At the moment he is regarded as a symbolic figure like Rama and Krishna and caught up in Hindu mythology. 'When it comes to be realized that he is in reality a historical figure, that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, that he is the point at which God enters history, not as a symbol but as a person, to change the course of history

and to transform it, then the decisive point in the history of India may also be reached.'⁴⁶

Christians can also learn from the meeting. The first lesson to be learned is 'interiority'. The West has made great progress in exploring the external world. 'We have to learn again to explore the interior world, to discover the other half of our soul, the ground of our personal being, in which is rooted our relation to God and to our fellow men.'⁴⁷ From this sense of mystery the Church can also recover the sense of symbolism and of the sacred. Bede Griffiths is also very impressed by Gandhi's and Vinoba Bhave's teaching and practice of non-violence. He believed that their example could help Christians to be more faithful to Christ's own teaching of love and non-violence.

Bede Griffith's dream is of a wider ecumenical movement in which men of all religions co-operate and learn from one another. The problems created by the spread of technology and the other changes of modern life require a united response from the great religions. If the religions could 'find' a common basis on which to work together, then they would exercise an incalculable influence on the world. It would then be possible to conceive a new world order, in which the ideals of modern science and technology, of humanism and democracy could be integrated in a spiritual order, which would give them that relation to ultimate truth and reality which they need'.⁴⁸ He does not disguise the differences between religions, but believes that they can learn from one another. 'In the final meeting of East and West in Christ, who is to say which will gain more, the Church, who will receive into herself all the treasures of the wisdom of the East in which Christ is already hidden, or

the East, which will find all its aspirations fulfilled in him, "in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily" ? ,⁴⁹

Raymond Panikkar

Raymond Panikkar is a prolific writer in several languages. His most widely-read book is *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. This was published in 1964, the year of Vatican II's Decree on 'The Attitude of the Church towards Non-Christian Religions'. Articles written before this date show that his ideas were already taking shape before the Council. His views have continued to develop and he is now one of the most original thinkers in this field.

The Unknown Christ of Hinduism has three sections: Encounter with India; Hinduism and Christianity; God and the World according to *Brahma-Sūtra*. The first two are the most important for our purpose.

In the first section, Panikkar tries to show that Christianity and Hinduism both meet in Christ. He does this by arguing that they do not meet at any other point and that 'according to Christianity and according to Hinduism as well, they can only meet in Christ, if they meet at all'.⁵⁰ The negative point is made by indicating the inadequacy of doctrinal parallelisms and of a merely cultural synthesis. The true meeting point belongs to the existential sphere. Panikkar describes how Hinduism and Christianity understand this encounter. Traditional Hinduism sees all religions as paths towards perfection, and adopts the attitude of a sister, perhaps an elder sister. Neo-Hinduism suggests that the meeting-place is in the Absolute and that the forms and beliefs of religions are all relative. The Christian position is that

we all meet in God and that Christ is the only mediator and that it is He who leads every man to God. All that is of God comes through Christ. This means that 'Christ is already there in Hinduism insofar as Hinduism is a true religion; Christ is already at work in any Hindu prayer as far as it is really prayer; Christ is behind any form of worship inasmuch as it is adoration made to God'.⁵¹ The concrete and historical dimension of Christ, however, is inseparable from his cosmic action. The Christ who is present in Hinduism has therefore not unveiled his whole face. 'He has still to grow up and be recognised. Moreover he still has to be crucified there.'⁵² 'Christ is there in Hinduism, but Hinduism is not yet his spouse.'⁵³ The attitude of Christianity to Hinduism is paradoxical. 'Christianity loves Hinduism because it discovers Christ in it, but this same love kills Hinduism as being a separate body and accepts it as a risen Christian body. Only the Christian belief in the tremendous mystery of death and resurrection can justify the Christian position.'⁵⁴ Conversion means changing into a new life, which is 'precisely the old one—and not another—but transformed, lifted up, risen again'.⁵⁵ The meeting in Christ of the two religions will be to their mutual enrichment. The future is open. 'Nobody knows how Christianity will look when the present Christian waters and the Hindu river merge into a bigger stream.'⁵⁶

The second section deals with the relationship of Hinduism and Christianity. Panikkar tries first to express this in purely Christian terms. 'Christ is the universal redeemer. There is no redemption apart from him. Where there is no redemption there is no salvation. Therefore, any human person that is saved—and we know by reason and faith that God provides everybody

with the necessary means of salvation—is saved by Christ, the only redeemer. This amounts to saying that Christ is present in one form or another to every human being in his religious way to God. On the other hand, Christianity is not just the action of Christ in the world, but is the concrete religion established by Christ to be the normal and ordinary place of his redeeming power and saving action. How does Hinduism fit into it? There are only two possible kinds of answers: either we exclude from Hinduism any possible action of Christ altogether (*i.e.* Christ would save good Hindus in spite of and against their Hinduism); or we somehow incorporate Hinduism into the universal economy of salvation by God through Christ, of which Christianity is the summit.⁵⁷ Panikkar opts for the second alternative and tries to explain one aspect of the 'somehow' by means of the conjunction 'and'.

Panikkar insists that the relationship is peculiar, *sui generis*. It cannot be understood in terms of the natural—supernatural relationship, because the phrase 'natural' would seem to exclude the work of grace and of Christ inside Hinduism—and because these two concepts belong to a different sphere from the one he deals with. Nor can it be understood in terms of relationships such as falsehood-truth or darkness-light. To do so would create psychological and pastoral difficulties. Further such a view would not be supported by historical facts nor be consistent with Christian theology. The Christian approach is to bring forth Christ—to discover him. Hinduism is a kind of Christianity in potency. It has to die and rise again in Christ. 'Hinduism as a positive religion will suffer a transformation which seen from its present state may appear as a radical change. It will be

no more what it appears today and yet it will be a better form of Hinduism, because of its elevation, its transformation into a higher sphere.'⁵⁸

The third section takes the famous Indian aphorism, 'Whence the origin etcetera of this', which means, 'Brahman is that from which the origin, etcetera, of this world proceeds'. Panikkar attempts to give a Christian commentary in an Indian form—and the commentary is that 'that from which this world comes forth and to which it returns and by which it is sustained, that "that" is Christ'.⁵⁹ In the section, Panikkar finds a point of contact between the place of Isvara and one of the functions of Christ. This, he suggests, may be an easier way in which to make Christ intelligible to Indian philosophy than by starting with the historicity of Christ. It also illustrates his thesis that Christ is present, even if hidden and unknown, in other religions.

In his article *Christianity and World Religions* in the book *Christianity*,⁶⁰ Panikkar makes even clearer his belief that the religions of the world are for their adherents the ordinary means of salvation. God's will is for all men to be saved, so He must provide a way for people to reach human fulness. 'It is unthinkable that the message of salvation could reach the immense majority of men, outside the normal and ordinary way by which this message customarily comes *i.e.*, through their own particular religious tradition. . . . When individual consciousness is not developed among a great part of mankind. . . . it would be an unrealisable dream to imagine that salvation could come through the individualistic effort of the individual against the whole tradition which has moulded his habits of thinking, judging and living.'⁶¹ It would also be wrong to assume that a person has to throw away his personal

tradition and deny his own background if he hopes to achieve human fulness. 'The thesis that the religions of the world are the normal and ordinary means of salvation for those who *bona fide* follow them is a logical corollary of the Christian position.'⁶² This does not rule out the fact that some forms of religion are false and degenerate. Also it is true that religions do not save by their own power. It is the Lord himself who saves.

Panikkar develops his position by arguing that faith is a constitutive human dimension. Faith is the existential openness of man, his openness towards the not yet. It is something given by God as part of human nature.

Panikkar's remarks about Christ as Lord are also interesting, but tantalizingly brief. Christian faith can be summarized by saying 'Jesus is the Lord'. 'But this sentence does not say that the Lord is Jesus so as to exclude any power, manifestation and reality of the Lord outside Jesus.'⁶³ Christ the Lord, Panikkar says, stands for the '*universal principle*, the ultimate pivot of everything, the beginning and end of reality'.⁶⁴ The manifestation of the Lord in Jesus was *sui generis*, but it is wrong to say the Lord is only in Jesus.

Panikkar again sees the Christian task as making known Christ who is everywhere present. The Christian does not preach a new Lord; he unveils Him who has been present since the world began. 'The Christian calling is to announce him, to proclaim the good news of the Lord, making him known, showing how he is at work in every circumstance.'⁶⁵

In conclusion, Panikkar says, that Christianity can be understood as Christ. In this sense it claims to manifest to the world, the Way, the Truth and the Life. It can be understood as the Church, with the claim to be the

visible element of that Mystery which saves the world, although no one knows the boundaries of the Church. It can also be understood as Christendom, as one religion amongst others helping men towards their goal.

The essay is very suggestive. Panikkar tries truthfully to chronicle the Christian position, rather than to work out his own views. It is also true, as he says, that the idea that other religions have a place in the Christian economy of salvation is still an unassimilated idea. All this means that the essay leaves one with various questions, particularly about Panikkar's understanding of the relation of the Lord or Christ to Jesus. There are echoes of Tillich, but these may not be intentional.

Some of the questions are more fully dealt with in Panikkar's *The Trinity and World Religions*. Here he explains that 'Christ' is an ambiguous term. It may be identified with the Logos or with Jesus. His own personal suggestion is to use the word 'Lord' for that Principle, Being, Logos or Christ which other religious traditions call by a variety of names and to which they attach a wide range of ideas. In his book he continues to use the word 'Christ', but by this he is referring 'to the Lord of whom Christians can lay claim to no monopoly'.⁶⁶ Christ, in this sense, is the unique link 'between the created and the uncreated, the relative and the Absolute, the temporal and the Eternal, earth and heaven'.⁶⁷ Panikkar does not identify this link with Jesus of Nazareth. 'Even from right within the Christian faith', he says, 'such an identification has never been asserted. What the Christian faith does affirm is that Jesus of Nazareth has a special and unique relationship with what Paul following Old Testament usage calls the Uncreated Wisdom, what John following Philo calls the Logos, what Matthew and Luke

following Judaism call the Holy Spirit and what all later tradition has called the Son.'⁶⁸

Panikkar does not discuss the other names and titles that have been given to this Mystery in other religious traditions. 'The reason I persist in calling it Christ is that it seems to me that phenomenologically Christ presents the fundamental characteristics of the mediator between divine and cosmic, eternal and temporal, etc., which other religions call *Isvara*, *Tathagāta* or even *Jahweh*, *Allah* and so on—at least when they are not seeking to distinguish between a *saguna* and *nirguna* brahman.'⁶⁹ It would be valuable if Panikkar could explore the other names and titles given to this Mystery. Certainly the recognition that the same Christ-principle or Logos or Lord is present at the centre of every religious tradition is significant, although it is not clear that the uniqueness of the manifestation of the Logos in Jesus of Nazareth is adequately preserved.

His comments on the Church are also interesting. Discussing the view of some that because the Church is centred upon the authentic and living person of Jesus Christ, she cannot in practice be *a*, let alone *the*, universal religion, Panikkar says: 'In actual fact the claim of the Church is not that she is *the* religion for the whole of mankind but that she is the place where Christ is fully revealed, the end and plenitude of every religion.'⁷⁰ Later he says, that it is wrong to unsettle the faith of those who find their faith satisfying. 'So long as the Buddhist finds in his faith a satisfying answer to his fundamental problems it would be immoral to cause him in the name of an alleged objectivity to have doubts, for man always reaches truth in a relative fashion.'⁷¹ This is typical of Panikkar's respectful and positive assessment of

other religions. He is also careful not to claim more for the Church than is proper. At the same time he insists that the fulness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ is relevant to all religions. Indeed the very modesty of his other claims makes his Christocentric emphasis the more compelling.

This emphasis is also significant because Panikkar sees that the world religions are being led to face the claims of Christ. He believes that mankind's spiritual evolution is passing through a particularly important stage. The different spiritual traditions are encountering each other at depth. 'The positive working-out of a theandric vision of reality is a task that our day needs to accomplish ... God's man and the world are engaged in a unique adventure and this engagement constitutes true reality.'⁷²

Panikkar believes that East and West are meeting and together creating a new pattern of human life. 'It will be a real production of a common effort, a living child of a mutual fecundation for which a real and not fictitious love is required.'⁷³ This is our destiny or *kairose* (a word that Panikkar often uses). This task has a particular call for the Christian who 'detached from this world and at the same time immersed in history is in a peculiar existential situation'.⁷⁴ The Christian also can help to ensure that this new life springs from a meeting at a deep spiritual level and this is why Panikkar in his own writings is giving increasing attention to probing the depths of the spiritual traditions of other religions. At the deepest level of the meeting of East and West—the spiritual traditions of all religions are finding, through death and resurrection, their transformation in Christ. It is the Church's mission to help make this possible. Panikkar says that this is the oppor-

tune moment for the Christian mission of our time, which is the conscious assimilation and theological elaboration of this basic religious community of mankind.⁷⁵

Klostermaier

In the writings of Fr. Klaus Klostermaier, the emphasis is on the actuality of dialogue, rather than on theory about it. Brought up, during the war, in Munich, he studied in Vienna and Rome. A member of the Order of the Divine Lord, he went as a young man of twenty-nine to live in Vrindaban, which is one of the most popular places of Hindu pilgrimage in Northern India. He is now in Canada, after serving for a period on the staff of the Institute of Indian Culture, Bombay.

His contribution to the Devanandan Memorial Volume, *Inter-Religious Dialogue*, is entitled *Dialogue—The Work of God*. He begins by stressing the fact that the only basis for a theology of dialogue is the genuine experience of real dialogue. The conclusions of those who have only book-knowledge of non-Christian religions and of those who amass biblical quotations are of no real value. Klostermaier says that he does not start from any theological system—not even the Bible—but from concrete experience. He then says that by dialogue he does not mean talk about religion nor the exchange of views between theologians of different religions. This is really comparative religion. 'The real dialogue is in an ultimate personal depth—it need not even be a talking about religions or theological topics. Real dialogues have one feature in common; they are challenging in a very profound way.'⁷⁶

Klostermaier looks, therefore, at God's challenge to the Church and to non-Christians as it is experienced in dialogue. The Christian who takes part in dialogue feels the need for a *metanoia* in depth. In dialogue God calls the Church 'to reform herself in truth and spirit, to return to her first love, to be what she is supposed to be'.⁷⁷ Dialogue also makes the Christian aware of the need to become 'more essential, more human, more Christian'.⁷⁸ It shows up the superficiality and irrelevance of many theological concerns. Dialogue calls also for a truly Christian life.

The non-Christian is also challenged by God through dialogue. Every individual dialogue has its own features and dialogue cannot be schematized, but a recurring experience is the sense of God's personal concern for each individual. In dialogue the partner is challenged by Christ, who is seen to be more than a saint or teacher or even one of the *avatāras*. 'In true dialogue Christ becomes manifest as the door to God, as the revelation of God. and it is not sectarian doctrine or theological theory that matters but spirituality.'⁷⁹ Klostermaier stresses that it is in spirituality that Christ is a challenge. Theologies and philosophies are exclusive systems which cut people off from each other, but when people meet in the Spirit these defences and securities are done away.

In conclusion, Klostermaier says that the usual theological problems of dialogue, such as *salus infidelium* or adaptation are of purely academic interest. The real theological problem of dialogue is the meaning of Christ. Dialogue requires real study and preparation, but even so it depends on God drawing people to Himself and to one another. It is an end in itself, not a preliminary to proselytizing. 'Dialogue starts with the conviction that

sincerity and respect for human freedom demand absolute fairness and patience, that the success of dialogue does not consist in an increase in numbers of outward membership of a church but in the real growth in truth and spirit. It starts with the conviction that we have to become transparent for God's voice, to enable our partner to encounter God and not us.⁸⁰

In his book *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* there is the same stress on the need for real experience of dialogue. The book includes many vivid sketches of actual dialogue—as well as attacks on those whose views are based on book-learning, 'the theologian at 70°F. 'They have an easy time, the 70°F theologians. They settle down in some library and find enough books there by means of which it can be proved that the non-Christian religions are the normal way to salvation for the non-Christian, that each one finds God even without mission—that we should not disturb the conscience of a non-Christian. . . . Will the God of the air-conditioned libraries redeem him who dies of heat-stroke in the desert?'⁸¹ Christ would not, 'like the 70° F theologians, bring the superficial peace of theological co-existence. He would bring the sword, the decision and yet the peace unknown by the world'.⁸² Towards the end of the book he returns to this point as he reflects on his experience. He soon found that truth is challenging. He never attacked any one, but the battle was there. Dialogue 'challenges both partners, takes them out of the security of their own prisons their philosophy and theology have built for them, confronts them with reality, with truth: a truth that cannot be carried home black on white, a truth that cannot be left to gather dust in the libraries, a truth that demands all'.⁸³ The Christian's self-confidence

as guardian of the whole truth was shattered. He was made aware of the un-Christian character of his own life. He was challenged by Christ.

Klostermaier's awareness that it is Christ who challenges both partners in dialogue is shown in another way in his attempt to express the meaning of Christ in terms which will be understood by the Hindu. In a pamphlet called *Kristvidyā* he tries to sketch an Indian Christology. He begins by pointing out how misleading is much of the Hindi translation of the Bible. 'Only when we find the "theological place" of Christ within the Hindu systems as the Greek Fathers of the Church did, does Christ become meaningful for a Hindu. As long as "Christ" is just a name, Christianity is just one of many sects. What we have to do is to express in Hindu terms Christ as the living relationship of everybody with the Ultimate.'⁸⁴ To emphasize this he calls his concern *Kristvidyā*, which relates to *Brahmavidyā*—the 'highest and only aim of the Hindu theologian'.⁸⁵ *Kristvidyā* will not be a *summa* of doctrines, but rather a *mārga* or path to ultimate experience. The aim of all Hindu schools is to be 'in' or 'with' God or the Absolute. Being 'in Brahman' or 'with Krishna' is a condition different to being 'with Christ'—but it is to this search that the Christian hope must be related. The difference is only known existentially. 'Ultimately *Kristvidyā* is not a knowledge to be acquired by syllogism but by identity'.⁸⁶

'The great variety of religions and philosophies that go by the name "Hinduism" make it impossible', Klostermaier says, 'to formulate a *Kristvidyā* which is free from ambiguities and which is acceptable to all'.⁸⁷ He gives a variety of suggestions and examples which make clear the basic principle that 'true *Kristvidyā* demands a full and

real "incarnation" of Christ in the culture and categories of India. We have to find the place of Christ within the Hindu religions and systems. That it is not possible to carry him into them *from without* should be proved by now from history. Christianity is not an additional theological system—perhaps "the only true, logical, infallible one"—but communication of the Word of God: it should be possible to express the meaning of Christ in any language and philosophy, to point him out as the soul and depth of all philosophies and theologies that deserve the name.⁸⁸

Much of the argument of this pamphlet reappears in the last chapter of *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban*—without the footnotes. Klostermaier says that as the knowledge of Christ is transposed into the depth of *Brahmavidyā*, it is seen that the stipulations set down by Indian theologians for the attainment of *Brahmavidyā* are a first step towards the knowledge of Christ. In this light the shadow of the Mystery can be discerned in the texts of Indian scriptures. 'Christ is much greater than our understanding—he does not reveal himself so clumsily and primitively as we often imagine a "praeparatio evangelica" to be. He needs no falsification of pious people smuggling the name of Christ into pre-Christian scriptures, he was with humanity from its inception, he knows all tongues and guides all hearts, he has many names unknown to us'⁸⁹ This means that 'Christ does not come to India as a stranger, he comes unto his own. Christ comes to India not from Europe, but directly from the Father'.⁹⁰

The strength of Klostermaier's writings is his insistence that Christ is the word of God. We do him doubtful service, he says, 'when we make of him a teller of stories,

a moralizing schoolmaster, a less-than-serious dreamer'.⁹¹ He is the revelation of God. The way Christians in India have spoken of him, however, has not made this clear to Hindus. To call him an avatar, for example, and then to say he is the only one is a contradiction in terms. This is why Klostermaier insists that Christ must be related to *Brahmavidyā*, the Hindu search for the Ultimate. His recognition that Christ is the Word of God makes Klostermaier aware of the gap between Christianity and Hinduism. This is not a matter of doctrine and theory, but of spiritual experience.

Christ's challenge is known in the spiritual experience of actual dialogue and Klostermaier is extremely critical of all theories. Yet perhaps he is less than fair to the 70°F theologians. Without the rethinking about doctrines such as *extra ecclesian nulla salus*, the way for him and others to engage in real dialogue would not have been opened. The fact that unlike many previous Catholic writers he is not bound to Thomism is welcome, but is it enough to base his thinking only on concrete experience? Collecting biblical quotations can be arid, but the experience of real dialogue needs to be related both to the Bible and to Church Tradition. For it is through the Bible and Church Tradition that the Christ, whom he wishes to see 'incarnated' in Indian thought and culture, is known.

Chethimattam

It is increasingly artificial to separate Roman Catholic from other Christian thinkers. It is however worth concluding this chapter with a reference to a book called *Dialogue in Indian Tradition* by John B. Chethimattam, who is Professor of Theology at Dharmaram College,

Bangalore. The emphasis of this book is on co-operation in facing the problems of the secular world, rather than on the depth of religious experience to which other writers considered in this chapter have given most attention.

The book is mainly descriptive, but at the end of his chapter on 'Christianity and the Hindu-Christian Encounter', he points to the salutary changes which this encounter has brought about in both religions. 'Their preoccupations and interests seem to converge to a common point.'⁹² He mentions five signs of this convergence. Both religions are giving more value to the material world. There is a similar understanding of the Word of Divine Revelation. There is some common ground in the Christian belief in the Incarnation and in the Hindu doctrine of *avatāra*. Both Hinduism and Christianity have arrived at a new spirit of tolerance for all religions, not just because of circumstances, but as the conclusion of theological thought. Both regard sectarian and nationalistic attitudes as contradictory to the very spirit of religion. They regard the whole human race as a single family. These converging aspects of religious thought are, in Chethimattam's view, 'only one form of the converging preoccupations and aspirations of the human spirit today'.⁹³

Yet, although Christianity and Hinduism are drawing closer to a common position on several points, an active and productive dialogue has yet to begin. 'What exist at present are at least two monologues which pass each other at a tangent. The pace may be forced by threatening problems posed by scientific and technological progress. The threat of "ABC warfare" . . . should shift the centre of dialogue from metaphysics and questions of belief to the secular problems that affect human existence it-

self... Human hearts will draw closer when men discuss not their differences and past grievances, but their common problems and common tasks towards building up a future which does not discriminate between East and West.'⁹⁴

V

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

The nearer one draws to the present, the harder it is to discern significant developments. Much of the Christian approach to Hinduism in India is still fundamentalist or unthought-out. Amongst those writers seriously concerned to work out a true Christian approach to Hinduism, certain trends can be discerned. There are those whose approach is conservative and largely that of Kraemer. Of those who espouse dialogue, there is a difference between those who see the basis for this in the shared humanity and common secular task and those who stress interiority and religious experience as the meeting point. There are also a number of studies of both classical and modern Hindu thinkers and surveys of Indian Christian thought which are relevant to our subject.

Kulandran and Paradkar

Two writers who are typical of a more conservative approach are Dr. Kulandran, Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India, and Balwant A. M. Paradkar who was for a period a Research Assistant with the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society. Dr. Kulandran shows the influence of Kraemer. In a comment on the Nagpur Seminar, he makes clear that Christian thinking about other faiths is from the pre-supposition of belief in God's revelation in Jesus Christ.¹

The Christian judges Hinduism from his knowledge of the truth. Kulandran also holds to the view that each religion is a whole with a distinct message.² He applies both these views in his book *Grace : A Comparative Study of the Doctrine in Christianity and Hinduism*.³ In it he gives an account of the Christian conception of grace as seen in the New Testament (especially in the Pauline writings) and in Augustine and Luther. He makes it clear that his own position is within the tradition represented by *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. The second part is a detailed and scholarly exposition of the meaning of grace in various Hindu theistic traditions. He finds that even the most developed ideas of grace are inadequate as a basis for an interpretation of the Christian doctrine. Hinduism lacks the sense of God's utter righteousness and of man's complete sinfulness.

Paradkar is primarily concerned to defend the need for proclamation and mission. 'The place of Gospel proclamation must not be usurped by dialogue.'⁴ He criticises Professor John Macquarrie for his article, 'Christianity and other Faiths'⁵ and Tillich and Panikkar. Panikkar's plea for the abolition of the terms 'non-Christian' and 'Christian' is one, Paradkar says, 'that the spread of the Gospel can ill afford'.⁶ He gives three reasons why the new attitudes are inadequate. If they had been adopted by the Early Church, they would have been the death of the Gospel. Secondly, all faiths are engaging in a 'battle for the mind'. Thirdly, the coming of Christ involves confrontation and choice.

Both Dr. Kulandran and Balwant Paradkar are scholars with a knowledge of Hinduism. They judge it in the light of their belief in Christ and they hold to his missionary command. It would probably be true that their

attitude is reflected by the majority of Christians in India. Although most attention will be given to a few original thinkers, it would be a mistake to forget that they are in a minority.

'Religious' or 'Human' Meeting Ground

A point on which exponents of dialogue do not agree is whether inter-faith meeting 'should be related primarily to men's "religious" striving or "human" aspirations, whether the meetings should be at the point of their interiorities or at the point of their responses to the contemporary social and historical situation'.⁷ The Reverend David Scott has put the case for common humanity as the basis of dialogue. The Bible, he says, is not interested in 'religion', but is vitally concerned with man. He notices that one of the common elements to be found in the resurgent world faiths is their concern for man. 'We stand', he says, 'on the common ground of humanity when we share together in depth as Christians and non-Christians. It is our common humanity which provides both the framework and the context of inter-faith dialogue. Our task then is to give our best efforts to the establishment of genuinely human relationships, to the "apostolate of human contact". The genuine humanity which is the basis for every inter-faith encounter is to be stressed.'⁸

This view is put forcefully later in the same issue of *Religion and Society* by E. V. Mathew, a Supreme Court Advocate from Bangalore. 'No dialogue is profitable if it is not centred round, arising from, and conditioned by hard terrestrial realities of human situations.'⁹ Bishop Newbigin has also said that 'the real point of contact

between Christian and non-Christian faith is not in the religion of the non-Christian but in his humanity'.¹⁰

These writers reflect both the 'Barthian' suspicion of religion and a recognition of God's activity in contemporary history. Mathew has no patience with mysticism. 'The transcendent God is doing his mighty works within history and He continues to be in it. Any realisation of God in mysticism or any search for Him outside the history of our world of secular human relations is vain and bound to be self-defeating.'¹¹

Kaj Baago

A similar attitude is found in those who extol the virtues of secularization. Kaj Baago is one who welcomes secularization, but he has his own distinct position. A Dane who was for some years Professor of Church History at the United Theological College, Bangalore, Baago has said that secularization will be 'the force that brings about a meaningful and creative relationship between religions'.¹² He is one of the most outspoken advocates of a new missionary approach. In a controversial article on 'The Post-Colonial Crisis of Missions', he says that the question is not 'how will non-Christians be converted' but 'shall they be converted at all'. He points to three reasons for the present crisis: the resurgence and renaissance of the non-Christian religions; the growth of nationalism; and the fact that the traditional missionary outlook 'was filled to the brim with western colonialism and imperialism'.¹³ He then looks at the attitude of Jesus to Judaism and of the Apostolic Church to the religious movements of its day. These were characterized by an openness which was lost because of the threat of Islam and the arrogance of Western colonialism. Today

the situation has changed and the question is whether Hindus and Buddhists should become Christians in order to follow Christ. Should they become followers of a Western religion? The answer is 'no'. 'The missionary task of today', Baago writes, 'cannot . . . be to draw men out of their religions into another religion, but rather to leave Christianity (the organized religion) and go inside Hinduism and Buddhism, accepting these religions as one's own, insofar as they do not conflict with Christ, and regarding them as the pre-supposition, the background and the framework of the Christian gospel in Asia. Such a mission will not lead to the progress of Christianity or the organized Church, but it might lead to the creation of Hindu Christianity or Buddhist Christianity.'¹⁴ He goes on to say that Christ 'is to be incarnated in all religions, not just in Christianity. . . He is to be born, so to speak, in all the religions and cultures, and only as this takes place is the incarnation fulfilled. Inside these religions Christ will perform the same ministry that He performed inside Judaism, and He is already doing so. If we want to work with Him, therefore, we are to accept these religions as our religions, letting the Gospel which we have been given and must in turn give, purify them from within'.¹⁵

This task, he believes, is made easier by the spread of 'secularization'. He tries to show that the 'secularization' of the pre-Constantine period made possible open dialogue, which later was prevented by the Constantinian alliance of Church and State. Today secularization is a major cause of the change from the crusading spirit to the more open approach of some missionaries. This for several reasons. First, 'that part of secularization which consists in the separation of state and religion, and of

colonialism and mission, will clear the way for a real dialogue about the real issues'.¹⁶ Secondly, secularization is freeing Christians from that doctrinal system which is called 'the Christian faith'. Traditional statements of faith are no longer meaningful in an age of H-bombs and spacecrafts. Christians have a new freedom. One result of this is that genuine indigenization is now possible. Thirdly, Baago believes that secularization will destroy the organizational structures and hierarchical set-up of the Church which are a hindrance to real dialogue. 'In my view, the true dialogue with men of other faiths can best be established by those who have left the organized Church or stay outside it, simply because only they can feel completely liberated in their manner of communicating their faith to other people.'¹⁷ For these reasons, therefore, secularization can assist the attempt to start real inter-faith dialogue. It would be disastrous if the religions of the world tried to combine to oppose secularization.

Kaj Baago's views are suggestive, but he leaves a good deal unexplored. It is not clear what he envisages will be the *content* of real dialogue. Secularization, in removing non-theological barriers, may make dialogue easier; but Baago does not say whether the basis of that dialogue will be man's common humanity or his religious experience. Again, as I. H. Douglas and J. B. Carman point out,¹⁸ the basis of his views on the relation of Christianity to other faiths in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostolic Church is inadequate. Further, Baago says that non-Christian religions must be accepted insofar as they do not conflict with Christ, but does not say what this means. His eagerness to dispense with the Church also raises questions which are not discussed. 'Dr.

Baago seems to have confused the proper stance of someone within a non-Christian community, who is attracted by the Gospel, with the position of a Christian missionary approaching that community from outside.¹⁹ The recognition that Christ is at work in the changes within other religions is welcome, but perhaps Kaj Baago over-reacts against the colonial legacy.

Mark Sunder Rao

A positive evaluation of mysticism and of non-Christian religious experience is made by several writers. One is Mark Sunder Rao, a Brahmin convert to Christianity, who has maintained an interest in Indian philosophy and the Hindu religion. He was for a time Editor of *The Guardian* and General Secretary of the National Missionary Society, and then was on the staff of The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore.

Although quite brief, his pamphlet *Ananyatva, The Realization of Christian Non-Duality*, is a suggestive attempt to combine different strands of religious thought. Mark Sunder Rao distinguishes sharply between religious experience and its interpretation. Following Professor P. N. Srinivasachari, he contrasts *Darsana* and *Siddhānta*. 'The word *darsana* means perception, vision of the ultimate truth, reality: the word *siddhānta* means reflection and resultant interpretation. The *darsana*, the vision of Reality and man's relation to it, remained constant, definitive, normative and final, whereas the *siddhānta* could be considered contingent, suggestive, tentative and *ad hoc* formulations of the former.'²⁰ There is a similar distinction in Christianity between the *kerygma* and the *didache*. 'The primary and plenary thing was the

kerygma, while the *didache* was derivative and relative. On the one hand we had the given facts and truth of revelation; on the other its explication to the believers and application to life's problems.²¹

The different *siddhāntas* or interpretations point to a similar experience. There is a 'common concern to overcome the separateness and to realize one's essential relatedness to all of life'.²² Mark Sunder Rao had discovered this in his personal experience. A vision left him feeling 'that ALL LIFE was held together in Jesus Christ, and that in no wise could we think of others as OTHER. Otherness abolished, at-one-ness, *ananyatva* took its place. Otherness abolished, at-one-ness, *ananyatva* took its place. Thus arose my creed of *Ananyavāda* or Non-Alterity'.²³ The word, *ananyatva* means literally un-otherness. It is the union or communion which results when previous alienation is overcome, and because 'of this dynamic and dialectical character it must be carefully distinguished from the static monism of traditional *advaita*'.²⁴ This and the fact that he did not wish to be labelled as belonging to any school explain his choice of the title.

The experience of one-ness that he had enjoyed, had, he discovered, a basis 'in the teaching of the early Church Fathers and *Aācāryas'*.²⁵ Examining the different Hindu *siddhāntas*, he shows that the object of the *Aācāryas* is 'to point to an intimate relation between the divine and the human', although 'in trying to spell out the import of it they take divergent courses'.²⁶ 'What really matters is to grasp the fact of such a relationship as being intimate, integral and eternal. The systematic exposition of the implications of this primary and plenary relationship is the task of the *siddhāntas* of the *Aācāryas* and these *siddhāntas*, as we have seen, lead people to think that there are "many truths": they confuse *mata*=opinion

with *tattva* = truth, reality'.²⁷ The same is true of the Church Fathers. They regarded 'man's union with the divine as the end and aim of life. In the course of its history Christianity has offered several patterns of this union. . . . They differ like the Hindu *Aaçāryas* as to how this relationship can be spelled out; they agree, nevertheless, that it is reality that matters to the believer, more than anything else'.²⁸

Mark Sunder Rao goes on to point out that the relation of the divine and human may be explained at ontological, cosmological, anthropological or immanent level. The particular contribution of the Church Fathers is at the immanent or pneumatical level. They inherited from Israel a belief in the solity and mystery of the Godhead to whom no one could raise himself. They developed therefore the idea of God, the Indwelling Spirit, uniting Himself with men. Another distinctive feature of the Church Fathers' thought is its 'societary character' as against 'the individualistic nature of Hindu thought processes'.²⁹ Rao then shows the important place of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of the Fathers and mentions Chenchiah's hope that India would produce a yoga of the Holy Spirit. The next section discusses yoga, which finds its most comprehensive expression in the *Poorna Yoga* of Jesus Christ.

In the final section, Sunder Rao looks at some of the implications of *ananyatva*. The person who has had this experience loves others as he loves himself. The individual salvation experience is also, for Christian thought, linked to the Creator's purpose for the whole universe. It is therefore in part an anticipation of what is to come. There is a tension too between moral man and the immoral society in which he lives. The implications of

ananyatva are not worked out, but that is typical of the suggestive nature of this pamphlet.

Part of the interest of this booklet is the way in which Sunder Rao is able to weave together the teaching of various Hindu schools in developing his understanding of Christianity. Often Indian Christians have related their explanations of Christianity to one particular Hindu system. Sunder Rao sees the value of all the systems and looks to the experience behind them, without ignoring the differences. His concept of *Ananyatva* needs development, but it seems to point to a constructive interaction of Hindu and Christian mysticism. Further, it is a mysticism which does not evade social responsibility.

Murray Rogers

The Reverend C. Murray Rogers, who in the nineteen fifties founded Jyotiniketan, a Christian ashram near Bareilly, also takes religious Hinduism seriously and has made a significant contribution to the development of dialogue between men of faith. In 1959 he wrote an article called 'The Content of Christian-Hindu Dialogue'. In this he says that the basis of Christian-Hindu meeting is that both men are created by God, redeemed by Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. God has acted for all, although his saving action has not yet reached all men. But the line is not between Jew and Gentile, heathen and Christian, but within each. The unredeemed 'old man' is to be found in the Christian as much as in the Hindu. 'We need to be converted as does the Hindu.'³⁰ This means that comparisons are excluded.

Christians and Hindus meet as they share a common life. 'The content of dialogue between Christian and Hindu is as wide as man's life. Far from it being

circumscribed by religion, religion will be a small and comparatively unimportant part of the whole.'³¹ Yet in the discussion of common problems, the Christian will bring with him his understanding of Reality. Theological ideas may not be mentioned, but whatever is discussed the Living God will be there. 'The content of a Hindu-Christian dialogue may be anything under heaven and our Lord Jesus Christ is always to be found there ahead of us.'³²

Some years later he wrote an article 'Hindu and Christian—A Moment Breaks'. He says in it that there have been three typical attitudes to the relationship of Hindus and Christians: the polemical, the neutral attitude of the orientalists, and the syncretistic. Each approach is defective, although each has certain positive aspects. He explains how at a meeting of several Christians who had had real contact with Christianity, all said that through close touch with Hindus and Hindu spirituality they had discovered some new treasures of spiritual life in Christ. 'As a result of these experiences we were quite unable with honesty to wish for the end of Hinduism, or to conceive of this spiritual phenomenon as being simply apart from Christ, from the workings of God's spirit.'³³

Dialogue involves a readiness to listen to the other *as other*. It demands a silence in oneself in order to understand the non-Christian brother as he understands himself, 'a putting into brackets' of my own explicit Christian convictions. It involves Inner Dialogue and External Dialogue. Inner Dialogue has three aspects. It means, first, being rooted in Christ. Secondly, it involves opening oneself to non-Christian religious experience. 'Then comes Stage 3 of this Inner Dialogue, when the Christian man, within the Hindu spiritual experience to

which he has given himself, becomes more deeply aware than ever of the irreducible uniqueness and transcendence of Christ, of Christian faith.³⁴ The Christian is now prepared for the fourth stage, which is the meeting of Hindus and Christians. This happens; it cannot be set up and arranged.

The first step in External Dialogue is for the Christian to know that he meets his non-Christian friend *in Christ*. He listens. When he speaks, he is thankfully to acknowledge the value of his friend's Hindu faith. Then, like the *Incognito* Christ of the Emmaus Road, the Christian helps the Hindu to see to what his Scriptures point, so that—and this is Step 4—the risen Christ may be recognised for who He is.

In Rogers' writings dialogue has moved from a discussion of doctrines or common problems to genuine personal encounter, the encounter of people of faith. He deals with his own deep experience of dialogue with Hindus. He combines real openness, a willingness to wait on the Spirit and complete conviction about Christ. It is a personal statement.

There are however several questions which can be asked. How does he reconcile the belief that Hinduism will discover within itself the Christ, *incognito* until today, with his hesitation about evangelism? Is dialogue genuinely open or is its goal to unveil the *incognito* Christ? In part the answer is that Murray Rogers takes very seriously the activity of the Holy Spirit. It is He who leads Christian and Hindu to meet. His is the work of conversion. Part of the answer is the sort of person that Murray Rogers is. His writings reflect his personal pilgrimage. They are not systematic theology. Their truth can only be tested by those who themselves enter

into real encounter and dialogue with people of other faiths.

Swami Abhishiktānanda

Murray Rogers was a participant in the group of which Swami Abhishiktānanda tells in his book *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point*. Swami Abhishiktānanda, or Dom Henri Le Saux, O.S.B., is a Roman Catholic monk, a Frenchman by birth who has become an Indian citizen. He spends some months each year at a hermitage he has built beside the Ganges at Gyansu in the Himalayas. The rest of the year he spends at Saccidānanda Ashram in South India. He tells of a group of Christians who met to try to enter into the religious experience of India. The book contains his reflections on those meetings.

He begins by welcoming the new awareness in the Catholic Church, since Vatican II, of God's activity in the world religions. The mission of the Church is not to lead isolated sinful individuals to their Saviour. The task is 'to gather up into the Pleroma of His glory and integrate into the People of God—individuals, yes, but individuals who have been placed by God in particular civilizations and religious cultures each endowed with unique treasures by the Lord of history'.³⁵ 'The time has come', he says, 'for the Church—indeed for all churches together—to enter into official contact with these religions'.³⁶ Partly this should be so that religions can co-operate to stem the tide of materialism, but more important, so that in humility and charity they can come to recognise their neighbour's awareness of the Presence of God. The Christian who enters into dialogue needs a 'knowledge' of those ultimate depths of the self, where the Mystery revealed itself to the attentive soul of the Rishis.

At the meetings of the group there was prayerful and meditative reading of passages of the Bible and of the Upanishads. The primary purpose, says Swami Abhishiktānanda, of the 'Christian readings of the Upanishads in the presence of Christ was . . . to rediscover in ourselves the secret place of the rishis' experience, and then under the inspiration of the Spirit and by an existential process wholly personal to each one, to allow the Christian expression and Trinitarian culmination of this experience to find its full development in us.'³⁷ For the Christian to do this, he has to put temporarily aside, *en epoché*, much of the conceptual expression of the Christian faith. He must first of all listen to the witness of the experience itself. He reads the Upanishads so as 'to enter as authentically as possible into the experience which has moulded the religious soul of India'.³⁸

Swami Abhishiktānanda sketches the history of the meetings and he tells of the one at Almora in April 1961 (to which, as we have seen, Murray Rogers refers), where each member of the Group said how India had helped him personally to understand better the Mystery of Christ. Two conclusions stood out from this. 'The first was that the Lord is already in India. . . Our role is to help the holy seed which has been sown by the Spirit in the hearts and traditions of India to germinate, or better, to put ourselves at His service to cultivate the seed in the very earth in which He has planted it, and according to the conditions of development which He Himself has laid down. The second conclusion was that India has received from her Creator a very special gift of interiority, a unique inward orientation of the spirit.'³⁹

At the meeting at Rajpur in 1962 attention was paid to some Hindu teachers. Then at Delhi in 1962 the

group took as the theme for its Bible studies 'The Gentiles in the Bible'. It also studied the Isha and Kena Upanishads. There were also readings from St. John's Gospel. Other meetings have been held and they have not always avoided speculative discussion.

In his concluding comments, Swami Abhishiktānanda stresses again the need to receive the message of the Upanishads with the heart of a child 'free, open and full of trust'—rather than seizing upon what is lacking from a Christian standpoint. Then as he penetrates the Upanishadic experience, and with its help, the Christian sets free the fulness of the treasures contained in the Christian faith-experience. 'The mission of the Christian in relation to the Hindu is therefore to transmit to him the fulness of the experience of the Spirit given to us in Jesus: to make him realise that there is in man something even more ultimate and profound than the interiority discovered by his sages and mystics, a *guha* more secret than that of the depths of the heart of man—the abyss of the heart of Christ, into which no one can enter save by undergoing a death of the spirit.'⁴⁰ To do this 'the Christian must begin by himself entering this essential interiority'.⁴¹ He must himself die to self and know the Paschal night before he can ask his Hindu brother to enter this death through which he will find resurrection and transformation.

If this is the Christian's task, it can be seen why Swami Abhishiktānanda is critical of the Church as it is in India today. His booklet *The Church in India* is subtitled 'An Essay in Christian Self-Criticism'. He begins by justifying the attempt to present the Gospel to religious Hinduism. It is not enough to preach to the poor and low classes or to hope that Hinduism will disappear under the

pressure of modern life. There is a mission to the religious Hindu, who tends to be impressed by the Church, but feels it lacks interiority. Indeed, says Swami Abhishiktānanda, 'one of the fruits to be expected from actual encounter between Hinduism and Christianity will be a renewal of the awareness among Christians of that very dimension of the interiority of their religion'.⁴² The Church tends to be too western and not simple enough.

Those who would present the Gospel to religious Hindus must first acquire an 'adequate knowledge of the traditional culture of India and of her religion and spirituality'.⁴³ The Hindu scriptures must be approached with sympathy and understanding. 'Instead of looking into them with the idea of first finding possible defects in them, would it not be more worthy to look into them positively and to try to discover in them the seeds of truth and holiness'.⁴⁴ This does not mean being blind to the drawbacks. The Christian has a right to judge. But the aim is so to enter the Hindu experience that Christian and Hindu may together discover Christ who is the 'end of the Vedānta'. The Christian is no detached observer. He shares the death which his Hindu brother must experience. 'In his own personal experience of the Hindu approach to the Mystery of God, he (the Christian) knows too well what has to be given up, what has to be torn, to be crucified. He has already himself passed through the dark night in the very centre of his own heart, on behalf of his Hindu brother—as Christ did on behalf of all his brother-men'.⁴⁵ This approach, Swami Abhishiktānanda adds, is the only way in which the Church can genuinely take to itself the cultural and spiritual riches of India.

The study of the Hindu scriptures must be done in a contemplative spirit. Attention needs also to be paid to externals. Swami Abhishiktānanda suggests an experimental seminary, on the pattern of a Gandhian ashram. All this in preparation for dialogue, which, he says, is not easy. It means a real desire to learn from the other. It requires humility and patience. The aim is to enter the Hindu experience and to discover Christ as the fulfilment of Hindu aspirations. The dialogue will tend finally 'not so much to the aggregation of one single individual into the Christian fold as to the assumption of all Hindu spiritual riches into the treasures of the Church. Once that is done, the so-called conversion of India will be at hand, or rather the recognition by both Church and India that they were waiting for each other, in the innermost part of themselves'.⁴⁶ Such dialogue will take time, for it must reach 'the depth, the only possible meeting place'.⁴⁷ The Christian embarks on dialogue without any specific aim of 'gaining something for himself or of giving something outwardly to the other'.⁴⁸ It is a simple act of love, expressing the unity of the children of the Father. The outcome is the work of the Spirit.

In conclusion, Swami Abhishiktānanda stresses the decisive influence that India's religious tradition has on Indian life, even if many Indians are not practising Hindus. Even if the externals of Hinduism change, the spirit that lies behind the scriptures and the teachings of the Masters will not easily vanish. 'It will last at least so long as the Church has not recaptured it fully, as a challenge of the Holy Spirit drawing Christians to the very centre of his heart, to Christ, up to the bosom of the Father'.⁴⁹

The similarity of Swami Abhishiktānanda's thought to that of Murray Rogers is clear. Swami Abhishiktānanda has a firm belief in the ultimate unity of all men in Christ. He is content to allow God to achieve His purpose. The fruit of dialogue is in God's hands. The Christian enters into dialogue in the freedom of love—love, which gives understanding and openness. Dialogue must be at the deepest level. It means for the Christian entering into the Hindu's religious experience and sharing with him the death which leads to fulfilment in Christ.

Dhanjibhai Fakirbhai

Three other people who have been concerned to communicate with religious Hindus must be mentioned. Professor Dhanjibhai Fakirbhai, who died in 1967, wrote mainly in Gujarati. As a young man he was converted to Christianity and was deeply influenced by Sādhu Sundar Singh and Dr. Stanley Jones. His own training was scientific and he became a professor of physics. He was, however, always interested in expressing the Gospel in a way that religious Indians would understand. He had a wide circle of Hindu friends. His writings have a practical, devotional purpose. He does not theorize about the Christian approach to Hinduism, but his works are a good example of the Christian use of traditional Indian religious style and terminology. His *Khrista-Gītā*, for example, tries to present the teaching of the New Testament in the form of a dialogue—a form so familiar in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. His fullest treatment of the Person of Christ and of life in union with Him is called, significantly, the *Khristopanishad*. His use of Hindu terms is fresh and creative. He reinterprets them in the light of the knowledge of Christ. He agrees that God

can be interpreted as *Saccidānanda*, but argues that Love is a more comprehensive category and that to call God Love is to go even higher than *nirguna* Brahman. Similarly he sees the life of Christ as transcending the three traditional *mārgas* of *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna* in an all-inclusive *yoga* of Love.⁵⁰

Jesudason and Das

The other two both belong to ashrams: Dr. S. Jesudason to Christu-Kula Ashram, Tirupattur and R. C. Das to an ashram in Benares. Jesudason comes from an old Tamil Christian family, whereas Das is a convert. There is, however, a considerable similarity in their writings. Both recognise that the uniqueness of Christ is an integral part of their Christian faith. They reject contemporary Hindu views that all religions are equal, but at the same time they reject the views associated with Barth and Kraemer. They recognise that God has been universally at work and that His revelation in Christ fulfils these other revelations. 'I submit', writes Das, 'that the Christ stands inextricably related to a real world process and in a significant historical context. He is no unconnected "One" or "Only"... He is the positive conservative spiritual and moral force integrating all that is true, beautiful, good and just... His uniqueness is genuine supremacy positively outgrowing, surpassing but inclusive, comprehensive and synthetic—He is the true Real. He does not deny the past, He fulfils it.'⁵¹ Likewise Jesudason writes, 'It would be a denial of truth to say that the Father and Creator of all mankind would completely exclude from His love and revelations those who happen to be born outside the Jewish or Christian

society.⁵² At the same time they insist upon the newness and fulness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

Their approach to Hindus is by means of patient persuasion and they object to attacks upon Hinduism. They are concerned to point men to Christ rather than to add numbers to the Church. Both are willing to find and use the positive values in Hindu beliefs and practices. Das, for example, recognises that idolatry springs from a great human need and believes that Christians can point idolaters to the 'supreme Idol'—'The Word made flesh'.⁵³ Jesudason says that at his ashram certain Hindu acts of devotion have been included in the order of service⁵⁴ and Das calls himself a Sanatani Christian, 'one who has a Vedic background and whom the Vedic truths have led to Christ for a deeper realization'.⁵⁵

Das and Jesudason, Rogers and Swami Abhishiktānanda are typical of those, often living in Christian ashrams, who wish to meet Hinduism at the level of deep religious experience. The simplicity and spirituality of their own lives make them a part of the Indian religious scene. They are appreciative of the spiritual depths of Hinduism, but firm in their belief that the fulness of God's revelation is in Jesus Christ and that the best in Hinduism points to him. Their personal and quiet witness is the way to real meeting with the religious Hindu.

Philosophical Dialogue

Another level of dialogue is the philosophical. This is not the place to give a detailed description of the several studies of Indian thinkers and systems made by Christians. The aim of these studies is to look at these thinkers or schools objectively and to give reasoned criticism either

from a Christian or a philosophical standpoint. Father de Smet, for example, in his assessment of Sankara says that before his teaching is incorporated into Christian teaching 'certain fundamental wrong views' need correction.⁵⁶ He judges from his standpoint within the Christian tradition. J. H. Piet, on the other hand, in his presentation of Saiva Siddhānta Philosophy, argues from a logical point of view that Saiva Siddhānta's claim to be the 'end of ends' cannot be logically established.⁵⁷ Others have given their attention to a particular concept. Dr. S. J. Samartha, for instance, has studied the Hindu view of history and concludes: 'Without the doctrine of creation judgment and grace, without accepting the healing fact and the redemptive activity of God, any view of history will be inadequate to provide men with hope and the assurance of fulfilment.'⁵⁸ Considerable attention has been given to modern Hindu writers. A few of the studies are interesting because of the light they shed on Christian attitudes to Hinduism, but much of it is not so much concerned to evaluate as to inform the Indian Christian community. The *Pamphlets on Religion*, published by the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society at Bangalore, are, for example, 'primarily addressed to the Christians in India', in the hope 'that they will contribute to a better appreciation on their part of their religious environment in modern India'.⁵⁹

Two studies of Dr. Radhakrishnan's writings are of particular interest for the light they shed on Christian attitudes to Hinduism. Dr. D. G. Moses in his *Religious Truth and the Relation Between Religions* considers Radhakrishnan's views on the relation of religions. Dr.

Surjit Singh gives his *Preface to Personality* the sub-title 'Christology in Relation to Radhakrishnan's Philosophy'.

Moses

Moses' book is in two parts. In the first he tries to elucidate the special characteristics of religious truth. In the second, he expounds and criticizes three representative views on the cognitive relation which religions bear to each other. The views are those of Radhakrishnan, Hocking and Kraemer. The relation of the two parts is hinted at in chapter 10 of Part I. There Moses says that the existence of different religions requires a standard or standards by which religious truth can be tested. Towards the end of the chapter, he suggests that the criterion of a religious truth will be the extent to which it satisfies the universal and insistent needs of religion. The chief of these common needs is the desire for moral regeneration and spiritual atonement. Every religion has expressed this need and tried to answer it. The extent to which it satisfies this need is the criterion by which to judge religions.

It might have been expected that Moses would try to show that Christianity gives the fullest satisfaction to these needs. He does not do this, although perhaps he assumes it. Certainly his understanding of the nature of religious truth, outlined in Part I, underlies his critique of Radhakrishnan, Hocking and Kraemer.

Moses concentrates upon the chapter called 'The Meeting of Religions' in Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. In the first part of the chapter, Radhakrishnan traces the script of comprehension characteristic of the development of Hinduism. Radhakrishnan sums up the view of the Upanishads like this: 'The one

ness of the Supreme is insisted on, but variety of description is permitted. The light of absolute truth is said to be refracted as it passes through the distorting medium of human nature. In the boundless being of Brahman are all the living powers that men have worshipped as gods, not as if they were standing side by side in space, but each a facet mirroring the whole. The different deities are symbols of the fathomless.⁶⁰ Moses says that there are really three arguments in this summary. The first is that absolute truth and purity are not possible for man, because it is distorted by the human mind in the process of understanding it. Moses replies by saying that the thinker 'cannot doubt that it is possible to know reality as it is. This is... the fundamental assumption of all knowledge, that reality is knowable and knowable by our minds'.⁶¹ The second argument is that all the living powers that men have worshipped as gods are included in the boundless being of Brahman and that they are different facets of the whole. This is based on what Moses considers the philosophically questionable notion that the supreme characteristic of Reality is all-inclusiveness. If that is all that can be said of the Absolute, then the Absolute becomes a characterless being. 'We cannot philosophically regard Brahman or the Supreme Reality as simply containing all the living powers that men have worshipped. Some of them might be a complete misunderstanding of the nature of Brahman, and some might have a greater claim to be regarded as belonging to the essential nature of Brahman than others.'⁶² The third argument is that because Supreme Reality is 'fathomless', we have to be content with symbols. Moses objects to the implication that one symbol is as good as another.

In the fifth section, Radhakrishnan gives fifteen more or less independent arguments to validate his position that no particular historical religion can claim to be the final truth. Moses takes these arguments one by one and criticizes them. It is not necessary here to list them all. Two major issues can be discerned. One, which has just been touched on, is Radhakrishnan's belittlement of doctrinal and creedal statements. Moses agrees that religion is a matter of personal realization. He accepts that finite beings can only think of the Supreme through symbols. Yet Moses insists that creeds are not a matter of indifference and that some symbols are more adequate than others. Some symbols are wrong. 'A full recognition of the inexhaustible fulness of God and all the natural limitations of man as regards having a complete knowledge of him does not mean that in the knowledge we have of God it is not possible to think of a more adequate or a less adequate knowledge.'⁶³

The other issue relates to conversion. Radhakrishnan says that our religion is seldom a matter of will or choice, but 'one of blind fate or herd infection'.⁶⁴ The different creeds express the colour and shape of their environment in their formulation of the one formless truth. No historical religion can be regarded as truth absolute and changeless. Moses insists that there are important differences between religious creeds. Some express the nature of the Divine more successfully than others. He says that conversion 'need not always mean the complete rejection of one historical view and the acceptance of another historical view'.⁶⁵ On the other hand 'it would be disloyalty to one's own faith not to be able to modify and change it when change and modification would mean a fuller faith'.⁶⁶ The point at issue is again the

nature of religious truth. Moses holds that the intellectual content or doctrinal formulation matters. Some creeds are more adequate than others and if a person becomes convinced that another faith is more adequate than his own, it is proper for him to adopt it. Moses makes clear that his position does not mean a denial of truth in other religious traditions, but he holds that Radhakrishnan is dangerously near to agnosticism.

In his criticisms of Hocking, Moses suggests that the question of truth is again blurred. 'If truth is one, and if plurality of religions will always be a scandal to the logical intellect of man, then the right position to take is that all religions are various attempts at reading the nature and significance of the religious Reality, and that they can be arranged in an order of more or less true, and that a world faith is the universally true faith.'⁶⁷ On the other hand Kraemer, in Moses' opinion, takes the problem of religious truth seriously, but is too dogmatic. All religions, Moses holds, attempt to meet fundamental religious needs. In many religions these needs are inadequately or even wrongly expressed. His implicit claim is that these needs are most fully met in Christianity, but he does not say how this is so. Elsewhere, in his essay 'The Problem of Truth in Religion', he deals with this. He says that reason cannot establish the truth of revelation. Yet once Jesus Christ has come it is possible for reason to show that God must be as He is revealed in Jesus Christ.⁶⁸ In his book, however, the aim is more limited: to show that religious truth is possible and important. The significance of his book is in drawing attention to this question of the nature of religious truth and in showing how this question is side-stepped by Dr. Radhakrishnan, one of the most important of

modern Indian philosophers. Some common understanding of the nature of religious truth is necessary if intellectual or philosophical dialogue is to develop. Indeed, it is an important subject for philosophical dialogue.

Surjit Singh

Personality is the primary concern of Surjit Singh's book. He maintains that the personal existence of God and man can be adequately based only on the fact of Jesus Christ. After a brief Introduction, he devotes three chapters to a study of Jesus the Christ and then proceeds to a critique of Dr. Radhakrishnan's views. He holds that Radhakrishnan's view of the relationship of the Absolute to God does, in the last analysis, deny the reality of God. 'God is nothing but a symbol. He is not a real being. The concept of God is adopted on the basis of usefulness and convenience.'⁸⁹ Sin and evil are treated mainly as error and Radhakrishnan does not take into account the seriousness of the fact of moral evil. Nor does Radhakrishnan deal with freedom and the tragic nature of freedom at any depth. Surjit Singh also objects to the fact that, according to Radhakrishnan, the uniqueness of man is temporary and co-terminous with the cosmic process. Man's individuality is lost in the Absolute at the end of the cosmic process.

To Surjit Singh, the weakness of Radhakrishnan's thought is his view of individuality. Radhakrishnan sees it as a distortion. Man's finiteness and individuality break up the unity of the Absolute. Yet in the light of Christ, Surjit Singh suggests there is another possibility. In Jesus Christ, individuality or finiteness is also destroyed. Finiteness embodying and affirming man's desire to be infinite or absolute is overcome. By making him-

self completely obedient to God, all contradiction between humanity and divinity is removed. 'By making humanity transparent, by stripping it off from any possibility of its asserting itself in its own right, the humanity was not by any means absorbed in the divinity but only became completely responsive. Therefore the God-man is not only a reality in history but is also beyond it.'⁷⁰ Surjit Singh goes on to argue that the personality of God is only a limitation in the sense of being a self-limitation. 'It simply means that God's being is internally defined and not something diffused and chaotic.'⁷¹ Surjit Singh holds that God does not cease to be personal. This is something true of His very nature and not just an appearance. The relationship of individuals to Him is never abolished. Equally God and the world never become identical.

The chief value of Surjit Singh's book is in his identification of the meaning of personality as an important issue. He shows that Radhakrishnan's neo-Hindu views are inadequate. Surjit Singh also has some interesting remarks to make about the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity. He accepts the Logos doctrine of the Fathers and applies it to the Indian situation. The Logos doctrine claims that all truth comes from God. There is no general or special revelation. All truth is integral and the criterion of truth is Jesus Christ. The truth to be found in the religion and philosophy of India comes from God and is a preparation for Jesus Christ. The danger is that the 'gnostic' reaction of the Hindus may distort this. Surjit Singh therefore examines Radhakrishnan's proposal of 'sharing' and his denunciation of the exclusive claims of Christianity.

There are, Surjit Singh says, different kinds of sharing. First, 'strategic sharing', which implies a common stand of religious forces against current secular movements. Surjit Singh sees no objection to this. Secondly, there is 'sharing in the Absolute', which means acquiescence in the absorption of Christ into the Hindu pantheon. This Christianity cannot accept. Thirdly, there is 'sharing as a positive relationship'. This is something that Christianity wants. It means not only emphasising the similarities, but also grappling realistically with the points of difference. Surjit Singh defends Christians against Radha-krishnan's charge that they are exclusive. Exclusiveness born of power, authority or social superiority should be censured. The real exclusiveness of Christianity relates to the conviction that there is something in it which is unique. The uniqueness relates to the fact that Christianity takes history seriously. Surjit Singh points out that the universalism claimed for Hinduism also is in fact exclusive and is of recent origin.

In his final chapter, Surjit Singh says that Jesus Christ is the basis of all 'reconciliation and coherence in all levels where God, man and the world touch and are related to one another'.⁷² He admits that some forms of historical Christianity have been anything but such a reconciliation. Other religions and systems of economics and politics also work for reconciliation, but it is only 'Christian reconciliation that safeguards personality, freedom and love'.⁷³ Again here there is the emphasis on personality which characterises Surjit Singh's book and which, he believes, finds its true basis only in Jesus the Christ.

Minz

Like Radhakrishnan, Gandhi has been studied by a number of Christians. For our purposes, the most interesting book is *Mahatma Gandhi and Hindu-Christian Dialogue* by Dr. Nirmal Minz, who is Principal of the Lutheran Theological College, Ranchi. Besides examining Gandhi's religious views, Minz makes a creative contribution to the theology of dialogue.

The first three chapters deal with Gandhi's basic ideas, his view of religions and the sources and norms of his thought. Minz then looks at Hindu and Christian interpretations of Mahatma Gandhi. These, he says, raise two basic questions. 'First, Gandhi's life compels us to ask, who is a Hindu and who is a Christian? . . . Second, Gandhi's appropriation of Christian teaching, while remaining a Hindu, raises a serious philosophical and theological problem. . . . Can the dynamic and form be separated without doing violence to the reality which bears them?'⁷⁴ Minz expands the second question in his next chapter, in which he suggests that Gandhi could be a point of contact between Hindus and Christians. 'Can Jesus Christ and his teachings', asks Minz, 'be isolated from the Christian tradition and accepted by the Hindus in pure form? What sort of Christ could He become within the Hindu fold? Would He be the authentic Christ whom Christians have known? Would the Christian community remain the same when such a process of acceptance of the teaching of Jesus Christ penetrates into the Hindu religious community apart from the organized framework of the Church?'⁷⁵

Minz next considers the different theological responses—the Orthodox, the 'Rethinking Christianity School' and the Theology of Dialogue. He takes Dr. Marcus Ward's

book, *Our Theological Task*, as typical of the Orthodox or Dogmatic School and says that 'this theological position is almost a consensus of the theological views of the majority of churchmen and pastors in the Protestant churches of India'.⁷⁶ The Orthodox view, Minz holds, rules out a creative response to the existential situation of the Church in India. The 'Rethinking School' consists primarily of Chenchiah and Chakkrai, and, to some extent, Appasamy. Minz recognizes their importance but disagrees with these thinkers on several grounds. First, he holds that they neglected the renascent phase of Hinduism and other changes in Hindu India. Secondly, they emphasised the mystical, individualistic, meditative union with Christ, at the expense of the cultic and sacramental aspects of Christianity. The disadvantage of this was that it divided Christians into two classes: those who relied on faith and those who relied on reason. They rejected the historical witness of the Church and reduced Christianity to the religion and person of Jesus as he is found in the Gospels. This emphasis upon the mystical union with Christ blinded them to the full realities of the Hindu-Christian encounter. 'For them the realities in this encounter situation are Christ on the one side and Hinduism and Indian cultural heritage on the other. This is a completely unbalanced over-simplification of the realities of the encounter. Their rejection of the Christian historical heritage and their attempt to strip Jesus of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and to plant Jesus as a fresh seed in the Indian cultural soil is unrealistic, unhealthy, undesirable. . . One cannot negate one's past history completely; one can re-interpret it in the light of the new, and re-live it creatively.'⁷⁷

Minz also has critical remarks to make about the theology of dialogue. His main objection is that the Theology of Crisis or Neo-Orthodoxy has been transferred too easily to the Indian and Asian religious and cultural situation. In addition, he makes several more detailed criticisms. He objects to the fact that the missionary motive is dominant, because this defeats the purpose of dialogue. The missionary motive makes theology defensive and self-justifying. 'It precludes the elemental openness and willingness necessary for understanding the other as an equal partner in the dialogue. We hold that the task of theology . . . is to promote understanding, intelligibility, and relevance of truth; and to effect reconciliation and community between men of different faiths in general, and between Christians and Hindus in India in particular.'⁷⁸ Minz does not rule out the possibility of conversion, but says that the Christian too must be prepared to be changed.

Minz further criticises the theologians of dialogue for concentrating upon personal and historical categories and neglecting the metaphysical orientation of Indian thought. The need is to give meaning to reality on the factual, symbolic and spiritual levels. Again, much dialogue is formal and intellectual. It should be a 'life-process within a community of men seeking increase of self-understanding and understanding of peoples of other faiths as belonging to a common culture and one human community under God'.⁷⁹ Their neo-orthodox emphasis on the unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ prevents them from clarifying what they mean by saying that God has not left Himself without witness among the Hindus and that Christ *Incognito* is present and active. This emphasis also prevents them from making a realistic

analysis of the actualities of the Hindu-Christian encounter. The approach is still too dogmatic, taking for granted that Jesus Christ is the starting point and criterion of judgement.

There is considerable justice in Minz's criticisms, but he lumps together a number of thinkers, such as Moses, Panikkar, Devanandan, Kulandran and others. We have seen that in fact their views differ considerably. Minz does say that Devanandan and Thomas have attempted to overcome the difficulties of adopting the theology of crisis in an Indian situation. Devanandan held that in each religion there is a search for the ground of man's being. He also saw points of contact with some of Gandhi's teaching. Thomas, with his concept of 'new humanism', 'shifts the focus from the problem of the relation between Christians and Hindus or men of other faiths to the issue between the human and the in-human'.⁸⁰ It is this that Minz wants to see developed. Christians and Hindus stand on the same side as they face a national society in search of a common spiritual foundation for all the people in India. Christians and Hindus in modern India have to encounter their common humanity and also a God who is the foundation of their humanity. Dialogue involves meeting and inter-penetration at a variety of levels of life. It includes 'external dialogue' or formal conversation, but it also includes 'internal dialogue' within each faith.

Minz therefore looks at the significance of Gandhi to both external and internal dialogue. He believes that, drawing upon Gandhi's methods and resources, Christians can 'build up a fellowship of believers which would cut across the social, economic, political and religious affiliations of men and women in India'.⁸¹ The motive for

dialogue is the 'vision of reconciliation and community between Hindus and Christians'.⁸² Minz does not think that formal dialogue at the institutional level is likely to be very fruitful in future. Dialogue must occur at the level of religion that dynamically binds man to God or God with man. For it is only a fellowship of genuine believers who can avoid the great danger of superficial glossing over of differences. Minz shares Tillich's concept of the 'latent Church', which is a 'fellowship of persons and communities which are open to the work of God, and willing to go beyond the restrictions of organized religions to fulfil their duty to God and to their fellow-men'.⁸³ Gandhi belonged to this fellowship.

Minz says that those theologians who claim that Christ *Incognito* works among Hindus have not been able to make their assertion meaningful to those among whom Christ is thus working. It is merely an affirmation of faith, although Panikkar's attempt to relate the Christ *Incognito* to *Isvara* is promising. Gandhi held that the Christ-like spirit pervades all people. He defined this spirit by reference to Christ—not to Krishna or Rāma or Buddha. He accepted that this saving spirit could be concretely manifested, but refused to believe that this manifestation could be confined to the known Christ. Here is a point of contention with Christians who claim that this universal spirit is only known in the light of the concrete manifestation in Jesus.

In his Conclusion, Minz looks at the 'Issues at Stake in Hindu-Christian Dialogue'. The basic question being asked today by theologians in India is: 'What are some of the common, live issues facing the Hindu and the Christian alike in modern India and in revolutionary Asia?'⁸⁴ The World Council of Churches, however, is still

concerned to validify the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ. Minz says this is the wrong question on the right issue. The Christological issue is central, but it is not a question of finality or superiority, but of the 'meaningfulness and adequacy of God's revelation for two religious communities in dialogue with one another'.⁸⁵ 'The present emphasis has to be on the horizontal line of Christology rather than its vertical dimension. To raise the question in vertical terms separates, isolates, and alienates the parties in dialogue and embitters them. But the question asked on horizontal lines can connect, include and create friendliness... The meaningfulness and adequacy of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ have to be made concrete and proved efficacious in the midst of the present social, economic, political and religious ferment within Asia, particularly in India.'⁸⁶ In the Hindu-Christian dialogue it would be legitimate to ask what medium of the revelation of God is most meaningful for man. It should then be possible to suggest that a human symbol, and in particular Jesus Christ, is the most meaningful. The Christological question raised in this way also includes the question of the nature and destiny of man. This in turn raises the question of Myth. The basic issues are the relation between Hindu and Christian visions of Reality and between their experiences of the media which reveal this Reality.

The attraction of Minz's book is the openness of its approach. It makes quite clear that dialogue is perverted if it has a missionary approach. It appreciates that the great need in India today is for reconciliation between different communities. It is the task of Christian theology to contribute to this. Minz has little patience with affirmations of faith about the work of Christ

Incognito or about the finality of Christ. The claims of Christ must be made real to those who are not Christian. This is why he puts stress on the horizontal implications of Christology. The meaning and relevance of God's revelation in Christ have to be made real in the actual existential situation in India today. Only in this way, and not by theological theories, will they carry conviction. The uniqueness of Christ cannot be based on argument but must be proved in experience. Convinced that this is possible, the Christian can enter into dialogue in complete openness and freedom, without the compulsion of seeking for conversions. In his sympathetic study and assessment of the significance of Gandhi, Minz himself shows something of this freedom.

Boyd

Two recent surveys by Robin Boyd and Dr S. J. Samartha end with comments about the task of theology in India today.

Robin Boyd, who is on the staff of the Gujarat United School of Theology, Ahmedabad, ends his *Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* with a chapter on 'Types and Terms of Indian Theological Thought' and a final chapter, called 'An Assessment and a Prospect'. The first of these two chapters usefully clarifies some of the issues. The first task of Christian Theology in India is to settle the sources of authority. Scripture must take priority over experience and over any philosophical or ecclesiastical tradition. Boyd considers the logic of Indian theology and discusses the words for 'God'. In certain circumstances the word *Brahman* may be used for God. Any suggestion of an ontological identity between man and God must be rejected. He looks too at the words for

Christ and for the Spirit. He mentions the fact that sin is little stressed in Hinduism and that its gravity is neglected by some Indian Christians. The soteriology of many Indian theologians also seems unsatisfactory to anyone trained in the western tradition. 'It is widely assumed', Boyd writes, 'that Christ's work of salvation is carried out just as much by his incarnation, life and resurrection and by his Person as by his death on the Cross. On the whole it would be true to say that for many Indian theologians Christ saves by what he *is* rather than by what he does.'⁸⁷ Boyd mentions the criticism of the 'foreign-ness' of the Church made by many Indian Christians. His most interesting remarks relate to the fact that within Christian theology, no less than in Hindu philosophy, there have emerged two strands of thought, the advaita and the personalistic or theistic. It might be easier to dismiss the advaitin tradition, but if Christians adhere only to the terminology of *Īsvara*, they will never be able to convince the advaitin that their faith is anything more than a second best to Hinduism. On the other hand only the theistic tradition provides the personal conception of God without which Christianity ceases to exist. 'It seems then', writes Boyd, 'that Indian theology is being driven to an intertwining of the two strands, a synthesis of *jñāna marga* and *bhakti marga*, and indeed in their different ways Upādhyāya and Appasamy both seem to admit this possibility.'⁸⁸

In his final chapter, Boyd looks ahead. 'The time is ripe for a new liberty, the liberty to discard, if so desired, the western modes of thought which have for so long been obligatory, and to move freely in the Indian universe of discourse, both classical and contemporary.'⁸⁹ It is not the time for new *summae*. Nor is the need for

speculation and 'adaptation' of Hinduism, nor for the mere 'translation' of western theology. 'It is rather for the understanding of the deepest Christian insights into the very nature and being of God, Christ, man and the world, and their expression in Indian language which can be understood and so accepted.'⁹⁰ Boyd distinguishes this sharply from the demythologizing of Bultmann, Tillich and Robinson, which, he claims, denudes Christian statements of their truth content. He also rejects the tendency of Roman Catholic writers to 'reconstruct' the Thomist system with Indian materials.

Boyd compares the situation in India today to that in the Graeco-Roman world at the start of the Christian era. Greek and Roman religion eventually disappeared, although much of the mythology survived in art and literature. Greek philosophy was gradually brought into alliance with Christian theology. In the same way Hindu *culture* is very popular today, but religion is playing less part in people's lives. Some Hindu philosophers are still influential and the need is for Christian theology to develop an alliance with different types of non-Christian philosophical thought. This is not syncretism. 'Religious Hinduism must die and all its finest insights be taken up and given their fulfilment, their true and full meaning in Christ.'⁹¹ The unknown Christ is there within Hinduism and the Church's task is to unveil His face.

Boyd's book is valuable and his conclusions interesting. The difficulty is that the Indian scene is so varied and complex. It is true that some aspects of Hinduism flourish more for their cultural (and nationalistic) than for their religious value. Yet in the sort of people whom Swami Abhishiktānanda meets, religious Hinduism is still

strong. Equally the neo-Hindu philosophers have their own distinctive position, which cannot easily be assimilated to Christianity. Boyd is right to say that 'the unknown Christ is present in Hinduism: but will the Church recognize Him when He unveils His face?'

Samartha

Samartha in his *Hindus vor dem universalen Christus* considers some of the major figures of the Hindu renaissance—Ram Mohan Roy; Sri Rāmakrishna, Swami Vivekānanda and Swami Akhilānanda; Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Radhakrishnan. His accounts of their positions are clear and sympathetic, although he makes the criticisms which are usual from an orthodox Christian standpoint. Having looked at those who have responded to Christ, without devotion to Him, Samartha then looks at those who have responded with devotion to Christ, but have stayed outside the Church. The main example is Subba Rao, who, following a vision of Christ, has led a popular religious movement in Andhra Pradesh. The problem is how to relate his personal vision to the witness of the New Testament and the experience of the Church. Samartha then considers those who have responded with devotion and become members of the Church, although they have been critical of it, such as Appasamy, Chenchiah or others. He feels that they have over-emphasized individual devotion and have not appreciated the full significance of the Church as the community of faithful and baptized believers.

Samartha also gives attention to Panikkar and Klostermaier. Panikkar's approach, Samartha says, raises several questions. The first relates to the way in which Panikkar handles the Hindu scriptures. Is it permissible to read

a completely different meaning into the sacred text of another religion? If it is, then one cannot object to those Hindus who regard Jesus as an Advaitin. Secondly, to equate Christ with Brahman may lead to an undervaluing of Christ's historical nature. This would be disastrous, because Hinduism already tends to neglect the historical. The New Testament only talks of Christ's pre-Existence after it has encountered the Jesus of history. Thirdly, Panikkar seems to restrict the mission of the Church to looking for hidden Christian truth within Hinduism. How, Samartha asks, can you enter a neighbour's house to tell him about a hidden treasure in his over-crowded store-room, unless you have got to know the house thoroughly beforehand?⁹² Yet it is true that Panikkar is devoting himself to such thorough study of Hinduism. Samartha also thinks that others will find Hindu-truth or Muslim-truth in Christianity. As to Klostermaier, Samartha again doubts whether history and the incarnation are given the weight that they deserve. He also questions Klostermaier's attempt to find the place of Christ within Hinduism. Samartha accepts the need to study Hindu thinking so as to express more clearly what Christians want to say about Christ, but he feels the attempt to find the theological place of Christ within Hinduism is too subjective.

Samartha's last two chapters are more original. Chapter VII discusses the 'Presuppositions of an Indian Christology'. It is not enough just to dress Christ up in an orange robe nor to rely on western theology. The essential question is 'What does it mean at this time in India to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour?'⁹³ Samartha's approach is existential. The warnings of Western theologians about the dangers of syncretism are

needed, but the situation in India is multi-religious. The cross-fertilization of ideas is natural, and it is not enough just to repeat the proclamation. The given fact of Jesus Christ in personal experience and history needs to be expressed in Indian thought forms. Some Christians have thought that Rāmānuja's philosophy would be most helpful, but Samartha feels that Christians must also use *advaita* thought forms. This is partly because *advaita* is being reinterpreted, partly because of the continuing influence of *advaita* in India today, and partly because Sankara raises the ultimate questions about the human situation. Samartha makes clear that he does not wish to interpret Jesus Christ as an *advaitin* seer. The task, rather is, to express the Church's faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour in the thought forms of what is still the most influential India philosophical system.⁹⁴ Semitic thought forms need not be the norm for all time. Just as Origen made use of Plato and Thomas Aquinas of Aristotle, so the Church in India can make use of Sankara. Samartha does not discuss the fact that a number of theologians would feel Origen's and Thomas Aquinas' use of these philosophers distorted the Christian message.

Samartha's final chapter is entitled 'On the Way to a Christology in Modern India'. Here he attempts to relate the Church's faith in Jesus to certain themes of *Advaita*, bearing in mind the current reinterpretation of *advaita* philosophy. He believes that *advaita* philosophy by taking Jesus Christ seriously would be helped to find meaning in human life and society, in personality and history. At the same time the Church's life in India has been impoverished by its neglect of mysticism. Jesus Christ must, Samartha says, be related to Brahman. He argues that

nirguna and *saguna* Brahman are the same reality and that one is not superior to the other. He quotes, conscious of the irony of the situation, a passage of Barth on the personality of God, which would be entirely acceptable to Sankara.⁹⁵ He also sketches the way in which the Cross can be presented to modern India.

The strength of Samartha's book is its attempt to present the Church's faith in Jesus Christ in relation to India's dominant philosophical system. Too often Indian Christians have presented an individual interpretation of Jesus—the Jesus of their personal experience, or the Jesus of the New Testament. Samartha is aware—as New Testament scholarship has shown—that we can only know the Jesus in whom the Church believes. Other pictures of Jesus are a figment of the imagination. Samartha starts from the given fact of Jesus and the Church's faith in Him. Too many attempts to interpret Jesus to India have distorted the classical faith of the Church.

At the same time, Samartha sees that this faith must be expressed in Indian thought-forms. He is not however a slave to any Indian philosophical system. He is prepared to use these systems creatively to express the Church's faith. His freedom to use these systems creatively springs from his existential orientation. He does not try to build up a theology for all time. Rather he tries to express the meaning of Jesus Christ for India today. This contemporary emphasis is important, and he shows himself aware of modern developments within *advaita*.

VI

THE WAY FORWARD

A study of recent Christian approaches to Hinduism points to various significant issues. First, there is the question of the relation of members of other faiths to God and hence the question of the soteriological significance of other faiths. Secondly, grappling with this first problem raises questions about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, there is the question of how Christians understand their relationship and missionary responsibility to Hindus.

The Significance of other Religions

In the last one hundred and fifty years, there has been a marked change in the Christian understanding of the relation of members of other faiths to God. In the first half of the nineteenth century it was widely believed that they all were under condemnation and had no hope of receiving God's grace and mercy. Gradually, it has come to be recognised that salvation is not confined to Christians. This view is now so common that Charles Davis in 1970 could write that the belief that 'salvation as understood by Christians is made available to all men and that the gifts of grace associated with it are not confined either in themselves or their effects to Christians' is a view which would not now be disputed 'by any theologians of major traditions, whether Protestant or Catholic.'¹ This may be an exaggeration, but the belief

that God's grace can reach those who are not Christians is now widespread.

Does God's grace reach them through their ancestral religions or despite them? The missionary, A. G. Hogg, for example, held that some Hindus won across the gulf of doubt 'by the narrowest and crookedest of doctrinal bridges'.² Yet, if a Hindu is said to receive salvation despite his religion, this isolates him unrealistically from his cultural and religious inheritance. It means too that salvation is restricted to a few exceptional Hindus. If Hindus are open to God's grace, then in the main it must be through their religious traditions that this grace is mediated. Yet this seems to endorse a religion, which from a Christian viewpoint is deficient. A possible solution may be to recognise that a religion is a channel of God's grace, but for a time. The Hindu's ancestral religion may mediate God's grace to him until that moment when Christ makes himself known with compelling clarity. Paul's Jewish faith only ceased to be a channel of grace for him after he had met the risen Christ on the Damascus road. This issue has been discussed too much in generalized terms which appear to give an independent reality to a religion apart from the very varied people who are labelled 'Hindu', 'Muslim', or 'Jewish'. Whether an individual's religion is a channel of God's saving love is an existential question and has to be asked and answered afresh in changing situations.

To see that the religions of the world have a place in God's plan for the salvation of mankind is to give new and positive meaning to man's religious history.

Hinduism is not a false religion to be destroyed. It is widely accepted that the Hindu has valuable treasures from his ancestral religion to bring to Christ. India has

a unique contribution to make to the catholicity of the Church. A few thinkers would go further and look not just for an enriching of the Church but for the emergence of a more universal faith. Even at the turn of this century, William Miller and Bernard Lucas were looking for a development of all higher religions, Christianity included, into a world religion with Christ as centre.³ This view needs to be carefully distinguished from syncretism. Syncretism implies a deliberate attempt to mix elements of more than one religion. Miller, Lucas and others, on the contrary, do not advocate such a mixture. They recognise the fact that all religions, including Christianity, are changing and developing. These changes, and the mutual interaction of religions, are bringing the religions closer. They recognise too the relativity of empirical Christianity. This belief that the religions of the world are growing into a more universal faith is not capable of proof, but it is a theory that takes seriously the dynamic changing quality of all religions, including Christianity, and that gives real meaning to the whole of mankind's religious history. The belief that Christ will be central to such a universal faith is perhaps essential to anyone who claims to be a Christian: but this points to another major issue, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

As it became recognised that there was some truth in other religions, this discovery had to be reconciled with the belief that Jesus Christ is the source of all truth and the only Saviour. Gradually it came to be seen that Christ's saving work could not be confined to the Church, but that He is the light which lighteneth every man. This raised the further question of the relation of the

universal *incognito* Christ to the historical Jesus of Nazareth. It seems that a more universal work of Christ in the history of mankind must be discerned, but that the model or key to such discernment is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels. As the American theologian Schubert Ogden puts it: 'The New Testament sense of the claim "only in Jesus Christ" is not that God is only to be found in Jesus and nowhere else but that the only God who is to be found anywhere—*though he is to be found everywhere*—is the God who is made known in the word that Jesus speaks and is'.⁴

The Christian Task

The task of Christian mission then is to help the Hindu to recognise that his experience of God is an experience of the God who is fully made known in Jesus. This requires of the Christian a real entering into the religious experience of the Hindu, in the way that Panikkar and Swami Abhishiktānanda suggest. After adequate preparation, the approach must be through open dialogue. The aim of such dialogue is not conversion in the sense of adding numbers to the Church. If the aim is conversion, it is the conversion of both parties to God. The Hindu may come to see that his understanding of God acquires new richness or needs to be altered, whilst the Christian may learn more of 'the manifold wisdom of God'. Dialogue, however, cannot be confined to such religious meeting. There are those in India with a deep faith in their ancestral religion. They can be met only by those who have studied and entered into this ancestral religion. Others, however, hold to the teaching of the Hindu renaissance or have no apparent faith. They must

be met on their own ground, on the ground of common humanity, or in working together in service of others. In such meeting and mutual exploration of each other's deep experiences, the significance of Jesus may be discerned. The open approach of dialogue seems to be the only missionary method adequate to the intensely personal word of the Gospel. For it is only at particular moments in a person's life that Christ makes himself known with compelling clarity. Indeed for many the moment when they know Christ by name seems to be not yet and it is the unknown Christ who calls for their love and faith. Dialogue must be at many levels and must take many forms and the discussion about whether it should be based on 'religious experience' or 'common humanity' is in a sense unreal.

This means that there is no single way in which the truth of Christ can be expressed in Indian terms. Samartha's question 'What does it mean at this time in India to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour? '⁵ cannot receive one general answer. The question should be made more personal. 'What does it mean *for me* at this time in India to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour?' This is the question put to every Indian Christian. The answer, expressed in his or her whole way of living, puts in turn a question to the Hindu 'What does Jesus Christ mean for me?' I do not think that the Christian should try to answer this question for the Hindu.

NOTES

(The date and place of publications are given when the first reference is made to a book. The following abbreviations are used:

C.I.S.R.S. Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore.

C.L.S. Christian Literature Society, Madras.

Ed. Editor.

E.T. English Translation.

I.M.C. International Missionary Council.

I.R.M. *International Review of Missions*, Geneva.

I.S.P.C.K. Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, New Delhi

n.d. no date.

O.U.P. Oxford University Press.

RS. *Religion and Society*, Journal of CISRS, Bangalore.

S.C.M. Student Christian Movement Press, London.

Y.M.C.A. Young Men's Christian Association.)

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II. PAUL DEVANANDAN

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2. *The Guardian* (Madras, 26-1-1939), p. 42.
3. RS (1958), p. 59.
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5. P. Devanandan, *Preparation for Dialogue* (Ed. N. Devanandan and M. M. Thomas, CISRS, 1964. Short title, *Preparation*), p. 180 ff.
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7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, 81.
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10. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-6.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
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14. RS (1964), p. 31.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 30 note.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
21. RS (1965), p. 82.
22. RS (1966), p. 56.
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27. RS (1969), p. 72.
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29. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
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 40. *Ibid.* p. 429.

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4. *Ibid.* p. 30.
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16. *Ibid.* p. 18.
17. *Ibid.* p. 19. Fr. Fallon's italics.
20. *Ibid.* p. 320.
21. *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (Ed. J. Neuner. Burns and Oates, London, 1967), p. 21.
22. *Ibid.*
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to Rev. P. Kändler for help with the translation of this book.

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